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The Methodist Pulpit

The Stars and the Book



Laudree M. Coberne

The Stars and the Book

Sermons preached in St. James Methodist
Episcopal Church, Chicago

By

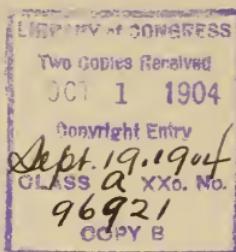
CAMDEN M. COBERN, D. D.

Author of
“BIBLE ETCHINGS OF IMMORTALITY,” Etc.



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CONTENTS



CHAPTER	PAGE
I. THE STARS AND THE BOOK, - - - - -	7
II. JESUS AS A CONVERSATIONALIST, - - - - -	28
III. THE BUILDER OF CHRISTIANITY, - - - - -	44
IV. THE CROSS, - - - - -	60
V. THE DIVINITY OF MAN, - - - - -	78
VI. THE HUMANITY OF GOD, - - - - -	93
VII. PAUL AND NERO—A HISTORICAL CONTRAST, - - - - -	106
VIII. THE SILENCE OF JESUS CONCERNING THE FUTURE LIFE A REVELATION OF JOY, - - - - -	123

I.

THE STARS AND THE BOOK.

A PLEA FOR THE CRITICAL STUDY OF THE SCRIP- TURES.

"The heavens . . . the law of the Lord."—
Psa. xix.

IN this psalm the noble truth is most forcibly expressed that God's Word is as wonderful as the heavens. If God is the one God who created and governs all worlds, the same method of work should be seen in all. If God is the creator of the Bible we ought to be able to distinguish peculiarities and marks which stamp it as being from the same hand as the stars. We can do this. In origin and purpose; in magnitude and hidden values God's Word and God's worlds correspond.

The book has wide horizons. It is as big as a world. It fills the centuries and bursts through the walls of partition between nations and races. As there is no French mathematics or German as-

tronomy or English physics but true science is a unit and all scholars brothers, so the Book appeals to all classes and ages and races; and as nature yields her secrets continuously to every seeker, so the Bible is full of hidden truth. Nature has constant surprises. One spoonful of earth beneath our doorstep contains enough mystery—enough possibilities of new knowledge—to keep the scientist busy all his life. The number of known stars has doubled since we were boys. No one can exhaust the universe.

Whatever God makes is packed full of infinity. Any universe that had no mysteries in it could not come from an Infinite God. Any religion or book of religion without deep mysteries could not come from an Infinite God. This is one of the mason marks on all God's buildings. Nothing is farther from the truth than the common idea that the Bible is an easy book to understand. It needs study as much as the heavens. St. Jerome, some fifteen hundred years ago, wrote: "There is no old woman so ignorant nor stupid that she will not set herself up as an interpreter of the Bible." Such assumptions are most foolish, most immodest, most unbiblical. It is true that the wayfaring man, though a fool, can run and read, but it would be far better if he were not a fool, and would not read on the run. The Bible does not

say such a hasty reader will not err in theology and Scripture interpretation, but that even such a fool may still be able to see the way of salvation. The most ignorant man can get enough light from the sun to walk by, but it does not make him an astronomer.

The Bible is no primer. It is God's greatest revelation. It needs study in order properly to understand it, more than Plato, more than the stars. If we need telescopes and microscopes and chemical laboratories and all possible learning to understand something of God's worlds—so with God's Word. Every new discovery opens new beauties and wonders in it and enough truth still remains undiscovered to make wise men rejoice for a thousand millenniums—truth which the angels might well desire to look into. This is because both of the Word and of the heavens it may be written,

“The hand that made us is divine.”

If the God who made the world is the God who gave us the Bible, no new discovery can be opposed to the Bible. The other day in Plymouth, Mass., I read these words, written by John Robinson in 1620: “I am very confident that the Lord has yet more truth to break forth out of His Holy Word. The

Lutherans can not be drawn to go beyond what Luther said. Whatever part of His will our good God has revealed to Calvin they will rather die than embrace it. And the Calvinists, you see, stick fast where they were left by that great man of God—who yet saw not all things.” John Robinson was more modern than some theologians of to-day.

God’s choicest secrets, hidden in the sun or in the Word are not revealed to the ignorant or indolent; a man needs to study as well as pray. I know a man who has spent a fortune and a lifetime studying the earth and the stars, asking, “When were these made and how; what was God’s method in creation?” I know other men who have spent all they ever earned and a lifetime seeking to learn all that is possible about God’s Book; when it was written, and how. All honor to the men who are willing to impoverish themselves in order to find out the truth, even if they reach wrong conclusions, sometimes. Wrong results are not the worst thing. Failure to study is worse. The astronomer builds to-day correct conclusions on the facts discovered thousands of years ago by those who reached wrong conclusions. If they had not gathered the facts we could not to-day be where we are, astronomically. Shall we forbid every one to speak concerning God’s

worlds and God's Word, except those who can speak with infallible knowledge and inerrant logic? Then, indeed, there must come a silence on the earth, equal to that which the Revelator heard in heaven. No one could speak unless he thought himself a pope.

For one, I am not afraid of the truth. I believe this Book can stand the most critical examination as to its origin, its composition, its accuracy, its spiritual supremacy and aloneness. If I did not believe this I would not believe that it was from God. No other religious book of the ancient world can bear the scrutiny of modern scholarship as the Bible can. I do not ask skeptics to use an easier test or a different test when they examine these Bible documents than when they examine other ancient documents. Let them use their hardest tests. God can be trusted to take care of His own Word and of the stars, else,

“The solid firmament is rottenness
And earth's base built on stubble.”

That is the reason I look with favor on the “higher criticism,” and every other criticism which applies historic and literary tests to this great revelation. Some people are scared at criticism, but not those who believe that the Word of the Lord en-

dureth forever. No discoveries, however opposed to his old theories, can disturb a man of real faith. God will never let any theory be destroyed that is worth saving. Those who attempted to break the telescope of Galileo were not honoring the God of the stars. Nor is it a sufficient proof that a view is wrong because it is different from that of the fathers. The dearest old friend of my boyhood days used to say to me, "Do you see that clock in the corner? It ticks off sixty minutes every hour, and twenty-four hours every day. My Bible says God made this world in a hundred and forty-four hours, as ticked off by that clock. Anybody that says it was a hundred and forty-five hours is an infidel and an unbeliever, and does not accept the Word of God." He actually staked the word of eternal truth on his own theory, that God's days, in which he made the earth and the heavens were the same length to the second as those ticked off by his grandfather's clock.

We see now that a man is not necessarily an infidel because he believes that God's method in creation was a little different from what we thought it was when we were boys; and such a change has not hurt either our religious experience or our reverence for the Bible. Whatever method God used in mak-

ing the world was a right method, and does not contradict the Bible when rightly understood.

Whatever method God used in making the Bible was a right method. I can almost remember when men thought that God could only make a revelation according to one method, just as they had said He could only make the world according to one method. They said the Bible was false and valueless unless it was an infallible revelation which had been received, recorded, preserved, transmitted, copied, translated, and interpreted infallibly. No one believes that now, unless it be some ignorant Roman Catholic. We Protestants, most of us, believe that the revelation was infallible, but that it was recorded, transmitted, and translated by fallible human agents. And we now see that if a really true revelation ever came from God we may be perfectly confident that the method employed by Divine Providence to record and preserve it must be the right method, however different from our preconceived notions. The man who honors and loves the Bible as well as the astronomer loves his science will take pains to find out what method God did use in making this revelation and sending it to man.

That it is a revelation, even most scholarly skeptics now acknowledge. It was a revelation to the

ancient world. India, Egypt, Babylon, Greece, Rome never discovered God's character and man's duty as it is revealed here. God did reveal to the holy prophets Himself, His holiness, almighty ness, unity, fatherhood. Those holy prophets did know the truth about providence and sin and moral duty and human destiny, as the writers of the Rig Veda and the Three Kings of China, and the Avesta and the Book of the Dead never imagined it. To the ancient world, wherever this book touched it, it came as a revelation. Gather out of all the sacred Books of the East their choicest sayings and put over against them only one leaf from the New Testament—almost any leaf grasped at random from the Book—and this one leaf will so shine with heavenly light as to put all the others in shadow. The Book has been breathed upon from above.

It is an inspired—"inbreathed"—revelation. Men who were divinely inspired were men who felt upon them and within them the very breath of God. God once breathed upon Adam and he lived and could make others live. So the secret and power of the new spiritual life were breathed into Moses and Isaiah and David and Paul and John, and they became inspired men, and when they spake they spake living, life-giving words. That into these

men God breathed a deeper and stronger spiritual life than could be found in any of their contemporaries (or of ours) is proved by the Book itself; an inbreathed Book; a Book of Life, alive with the very life breath of Deity. By its fruits ye shall know it. It is inspired, for it divinely inspires. If this is not the record of a true revelation from God, then is our faith vain that God has ever given such a revelation.

There are those who believe in the "Inspiration of Humanity," and that the Hebrew prophets and New Testament apostles were only men like other men, who merely opened their souls to God's direction and influence better than others. It is a great thought. It means that Judas might have been St. Paul; and that anybody with equal ability, who lived at the time, might have written Isaiah or Ezekiel or the twenty-third Psalm. It may be true, but I am not convinced. There seems to me a special directive, selective, protective influence upon these Bible writers. We see this as we compare them with other writers of equal ability who were their contemporaries, or as we compare what they have written with the best that has been done since. Religious insight reached its blossom and best fruitage in them. The Bible remains a revela-

tion to the twentieth century, for it is still giving the standard of morals, of high thought and high living even to the skeptics of this era.

But if this is a true revelation then we may be perfectly sure that the right method was used by Divine Providence to record and preserve it. Whatever scientific research may prove to have been God's method in giving this revelation, it can never cease to be the Christian's authoritative guide book. Man needs it as he needs the sun. He was created that way. The world has outgrown every other ancient book, but it is only slowly growing up to this. "Thy word is settled in heaven." Celsus and Porphyry and Julian the Apostate are gone, but the Word of the Lord remains. Voltaire laughed loud as he said he had destroyed the Bible; but more Bibles have been published since he stopped laughing than in all the previous millenniums since Moses. And the Book is not getting old. It is full of hope and buoyancy and the splendid optimism of youth. It seems as if the Ancient of Days had breathed upon it the breath of an eternal life.

It is not the ink marks (the letters and words of the Book) that are inspired, but the thought and spirit of it. We ought to have learned that long ago by the quotations made by Jesus and the ap-

ties. The recognition of this fact shatters most of the objections made against the trustworthiness of Scripture.

Most modern criticism of the Bible is a criticism of the lantern and not of the light. Such criticism (even if true) would not imperil the Bible's inspiration any more than the breaking of a stylus in the hand of St. Paul would have imperiled his inspiration, or than the passing of a cyclone over the sun's surface would hint that its light was not divinely created. The Rabbis emphasized the letter of the Scripture, and the most orthodox of these regarded the Septuagint as an impious book because the sacred letters and words were changed from Hebrew to Greek; but Jesus believed that he was properly quoting the Holy Scriptures when he ignored the letter and gave merely the thought and spirit of the revelation. The "holy oracles" may be written in Hebrew or Greek, in the English of King James or of Victoria, it matters not, if the spiritual thought is given correctly. It would not matter seriously if the spelling were sometimes wrong and the numbers copied incorrectly, or the names misplaced occasionally, for all this was true of the Septuagint copy, which Jesus and the apostles used. It would not even seem to matter fatally if these inspired men

themselves had made a slip of the pen in putting down a number, or a slip of memory in quoting an ancient historian, or even a slip of knowledge in the use of the many documents which they themselves tell us they consulted in their writings. That is not an important thing, if the spiritual argument can be trusted. We are injuring our cause to act and talk as if the Bible would be destroyed if any such incidental human infirmity could be detected in the Scriptures.

Supposing that next year in the cave of Machpelah there should be found, along with the mummy of Joseph, a copy of the Pentateuch, or that in some secret room in the catacombs of Rome we should find a manuscript copy of one of the letters of St. Paul; and supposing it was found that originally, in the original manuscripts, an occasional mistake of spelling or grammar were found or even a slip of memory, would that interfere materially with the value of these discovered manuscripts or with the inspiration of their writers? Not to my mind, or to the mind of orthodox scholars generally.

In nature nothing is too weak or imperfect to be used by the perfect God to work His perfect will. There are spots even on the sun and the

moon is scarred and broken; yet these are God's light-bearers. It ought not to appall us if we should find the same peculiarities and marks in God's Word as in God's worlds, stamping it as being controlled by the same hand that rules the heavens. The most impressive book that Darwin ever wrote was that on earth-worms, in which he showed that all the fertile soil of the planet was created by these worms, and the most startling thing in Professor Wallace's last book on astronomy is his statement that it is the dust in the atmosphere which makes the planet habitable. It is the millions of imperfect blossoms that fall and never come to fruitage which prepare the earth for undreamed of beauties of fruit and foliage in time to come. So man, the imperfect, may be ordained of God to teach His perfect will. The nation of Israel could receive, even from such imperfect men as Moses and David and Solomon and Elijah a law which—though not perfect, as Jesus Himself taught—could be the schoolmaster to bring the world up nearer to God's idea. The fact that God can use imperfect agents to work out His perfect will (and make the ignorance as well as the wrath of man to praise Him) is an evidence of wisdom. So a wise man has recently taken the refuse

of the silk factory and made out of it a velvet almost incomparably more beautiful and precious than the perfect silk.

Therefore if any man tells me that the Old Testament or New Testament writers were imperfect in character or knowledge—that one man quoted Zephaniah when he meant to quote Zechariah, and that (perhaps because he had not been a good Bible student in early life) Stephen put the grave of one of the patriarchs in the wrong field, or that Moses had rather an imperfect idea of modern astronomy and geology and did not express himself with scientific accuracy—I simply say that the less these men knew and the more nearly they were akin in knowledge to the ignorant age in which they lived the more will I revere the work the Almighty God has been able to do through them. God's mark is on them and their work. Paul thanked God for his imperfections, because God could thus get greater glory through the work he did.

Personally, I do not pretend to any superior knowledge as to what will be the condition of the original Mosaic or Apostolic manuscripts if we ever find them. These men may have been infallible penmen, grammarians, historians, and scientists, or they may not. That must be determined by the evidence.

But in any case the Bible is going to remain, even if our ideas of how the Lord gave the Word change. The Bible itself speaks of the prophets and apostles as men of like infirmities as we are, and in any case they were human. The Book is from God, but it comes to us from the pens of men who were human —does not this make the Book more entrancingly interesting?

What a Book this is! Here are fragments from royal pens, and long sections from the swineherd and the shepherd; a passage from an Egyptian general and an entire book from one of the captives in Babylon; one section from a Persian prince and another from a Roman official, and still another from a learned Greek scholar, and long sections from some uneducated Galilean fishermen. Here are chapters containing histories so ancient that no other record in the world made mention of them till in our times the tombs of the Nile and the Euphrates were opened and the dead came from their graves to bear witness to the truth of the old Book. Here are chapters written in the center of Asia, and others from the coast of Africa and others still from the capital of Europe. Here are fragments of songs that antedate by many centuries the songs of Homer, and others written by contempor-

ries of Æschylus and Sappho and Sophocles; and others still composed after Greek and Roman poetry of the best type had perished. Each one of these Bible authors has marked peculiarities of style, favorite words, illustrations, figures of speech. The Lord spoke through them, but He did not destroy their individuality. Amos, Isaiah, Ezekiel, Luke, John, Paul, each writes in a style all his own. The spirit is divine, but the penmanship, the style, the vocabulary, the phrasing of the thought, that is human, colored with the temperament of the writer, colored by his environment, possibly by his ignorance.

These men were not "mediums" simply used as mouths by their controlling spirit. They were not simply inspired pens, but inspired men. That is much better. Men can be "witnesses" and pens can not. Out of the depths of their own being, touched by contact with the living God, these holy men spoke and wrote what they saw and felt, and no criticism of their method of giving the revelation can effect in any degree adversely the value, potency, and divinity of the message itself.

If these were honest men, and have given an honest record of what they saw and heard then all else that they say becomes credible. Jesus is the

supreme miracle of the Bible, and if these men saw what they say they saw, and heard what they say they heard, Jesus is a fact, and His power to heal and forgive is a fact, and the fact of prophecy fulfilled in Jesus puts the divine stamp of truth upon all that variegated Scripture which "spake of Him." We call the Bible as a whole God's Book; not because we must give up our Bible if it is proved that the Song of Solomon or Second Peter, or Jude were not written by the men we thought they were; or that Jonah is a parable and Genesis is a poetical picture-story instead of literal history; but because as a whole the Old Testament is pervaded by the same great holy hope of a coming One; and the New Testament is pervaded with the holy joy of One who is come. Jesus Christ is the vindication of Old Testament prophecy and the certification of New Testament theology.

We call this the Holy Bible, not because each letter is sacred, nor because it was written miraculously, but because it contains a holy message from a Holy God, which, if accepted, can make us holy. No other book on earth can do this. It does. That holy message has passed into human hearts and been written down by human

hands, and therefore necessarily bears marks of human weakness, perhaps even of human imperfection, but it is God's message to men none the less. The style is human; the knowledge of current events and current science is human; but the message—that for which the Book was written, that which makes it the Bible—is divine. What need we care for the name of the prophet who wrote the fifty-third chapter of Isaiah, or whether one prophet or three prophets wrote it? Let the critics settle that. What we do care to know is whether the Man of Sorrows has indeed come, bearing our sorrows and carrying our griefs, wounded for our transgressions and bruised for our iniquities and whether with His stripes we can now be healed.

Is this revelation concerning God and Jesus Christ and His power to save true? Yes, it is eternally true. These men can be trusted. Those who have made the most careful study of all the objections raised against the truth of the Bible tell us to-day with unanimous voice that there never was a history written in all the ancient world as accurate and careful and minutely correct as this. We do not know the names of all those ancient scribes who wrote the Pentateuch, the Judges, the Kings,

and the Prophets, nor do we know the exact date at which all these books were written. But they were not written by dishonest men, who have willfully misrepresented the facts. Modern archæology witnesses to that. The "Lord and Master of us all" witnesses to that. Jesus trusted the Old Testament. His creed ought to be ours. These writers of the Old and New Testaments used all their faculties to tell the exact truth. The character of the writers, we know, proves that, and the character of the writings. People are not willing to be martyrs for what they do not believe very thoroughly.

The Voltaire of America once pictured before an audience the tortures of the Inquisition, and added, "There is not much of the martyr about me. I would have told them, 'Now you write it down, and I'll sign it. You may have one God or a million; you may have one hell or a million; you stop that!'" Those were his own words. He actually confessed that he would have turned Judas to his most cherished convictions, if the thumbscrew were put on. That shows what a man would endure for his faith that the Bible was not true. Now call the roll of Christian martyrs, who were persecuted and beaten, sawn asunder;

suffered the violence of fire; and felt the teeth of lions because of their faith in the truth of this revelation of God. Name one of them that ever made a penny out of his religion. Name one of them, be it prophet, apostle, or evangelist, who did not count all things as dung that he might win God's favor and proclaim God's message worthily. No danger could daunt them; no threat could frighten them, no scorn could silence them; no sorrows could overwhelm them. They were joyously willing to face prison and poverty and martyrdom in proof of the truth of their message.

Such were the men who wrote these Scriptures; and they can be trusted. The Word of the Lord endureth forever. That Word is yet the power of God unto salvation. The Bible, according to its own affirmation, is a book of light and life, and it is yet perfect for the purpose for which it was given. As a Book of Salvation, not even the infidels have any substitute to propose. It was not given to teach history or philosophy or science, but to teach religion. It was not given to dazzle the eyes or show the scenery, but to walk by. It does what it claims to do. It was given to be a light to the feet; no one denies that it is that. This

is the only book that is sunlight to the path, everywhere and for evermore. That is what the Bible is for.

The Psalmist was right. The splendor of God's Word is as great as that of the sun, and it would be as easy to push the sun out of its course as to jolt this Book from its march of victory.

II.

JESUS AS A CONVERSATIONALIST.

“Did not our heart burn within us while He talked with us?”—Luke xxiv, 32.

JESUS was pre-eminently a talker. He was not an orator, nor an elocutionist, nor a declaimer; He was simply a wonderful talker. He “taught” and “preached,” it is true, but His teaching and preaching was chiefly conversational. Jesus did not need to lift Himself above the people in order to seem great. The Rockies do not need to be hoisted upon stilts. Jesus lived down among the people, and talked with them at the table and by the wayside, opening to them the Scriptures, and lifting them up where they could get the “heavenly vision.”

It is not an easy thing to be always great in conversation and at the same time great otherwise. The world’s best thinkers have not ordinarily been its best talkers. Addison was the star of his generation as a writer; but sat silent at all

evening parties. Longfellow was wrong when he declared he was the only American since the Declaration of Independence that could not make a stump-speech, for Hawthorne was as diffident as he, and when Washington Irving tried to introduce Charles Dickens to a New England audience he was compelled to sit down in utter confusion. Men of the deepest thought, who have necessarily cultivated the habit of meditation and mental abstraction, seldom excel in conversation. Yet here is one, the profoundest Philosopher of all, whose talk is the most captivating of all.

How spontaneous it is—the talk of this Man of Galilee! Macaulay had such a memory that he could repeat the “Lay of the Last Minstrel” and the first six books of “Paradise Lost” without missing a word, and yet it is said that he prepared for special occasions that he might talk brilliantly. It is even reported that a friend calling unexpectedly upon that most celebrated of all talkers, Madame de Staël, picked up one of her notebooks and found it entitled “Remarks to be Used in Conversation.” These all felt it necessary to guard against the dangers of extemporaneous speech, wisely whispering,

“My tongue within my lips I rein
For who talks much must talk in vain.”

It was our own "Autocrat of the Breakfast-table" who said, "Talking is one of the fine arts—the noblest, the most important, the most difficult. It is better to lose a pint of blood from your veins than to have a nerve tapped."

Yet here is one extemporaneous talker who never fails, never falls to the common level, nor even below his own best efforts. The table-talks of Coleridge, of Luther, of Oliver Wendell Holmes seem commonplace when compared with His. Questioned by the learned doctors, whose life had been given to study and controversy; questioned by the shrewd, acute, practical business men; questioned by friends or enemies on the most delicate and subtle subjects, his answers were always ready, always clear, always confident. He was never embarrassed. He never hesitated. Pope Innocent would delay an answer to an inconvenient question by a convenient cough, but of this One it is written, "He answered, and said;" and often the answer was given while the question was yet trembling unasked upon the lips. What royal spontaneity of utterance is this when one can be always talking and all his talk worth remembering for two thousand years!

Consider also the ease and simplicity of His

speech. One could not imagine a notebook under his cloak in which these *bon mots* were written out. Everything is beautifully unconventional, inartificial, unstudied. He does not cry nor lift up His voice in the streets; He simply talks. But although His conversation is simplicity itself, like the few lines of Michael Angelo in Raphael's studio, it is enough. No other than He could have done it. It is the stroke of the master. Its simplicity adds to its greatness.

"Truth shines brightest through plainest dress."

Another peculiarity of this table-talk and way-side-talk of Jesus was its calmness. No one can look over these tea-table conversations without reaching the uncomfortable impression that this Man could hardly eat a meal but some one would charge upon Him with some impudent or savage question, seeking to catch Him in His talk. This seems true not only at Simon's house and the house of Zacchaeus and of Levi, but even in the special privacy of the loving home at Bethany. But He was never ruffled nor ever surprised into exaggeration, or recrimination, or apology. Jesus never lost His balance. Both Macaulay and Holmes recognized the danger of verbal and dialectical exag-

geration in the heat of quick speech—and from this danger neither of these wholly escaped; but this Speaker is always accurate, always judicial, always consistent. It was at the very hour when the people were showing Him the most honor and when they were the surest of the future success of His cause and of their own loyalty that He wept over Jerusalem and lamented the apostasy of the populace. It was at the supper-table, just after He had foretold the immediate disaffection of all His favorite disciples, that He gave them His sweetest love-messages and most confidently spoke of their future greatness and heavenly honor.

Many of the deepest and most impressive remarks of Jesus were made at the tea-table. About one-third of all John's Gospel consists merely of a report of one of these table-talks, and the parable of the Great Supper and many more of His most beautiful parables were spoken while He was sitting at the supper-table.

Our Autocrat said, "I talk half the time to find out my own thoughts, as a schoolboy turns out his pockets to see what is in them;" but not so this Man Wonderful. He never contradicted Himself, but was always consistent and perfect in the roundness of His thought. A Chinese proverb has it that

an unlucky word dropped can not be dragged back by a coach and six horses; but never a word did this strange, simple Talker ever drop, in haste or excitement, to be regretted or modified. Can this be said of any other?

Connected with this spontaneity, simplicity, sobriety, and consistency of utterance there was also a brilliancy never equaled.

Both De Quincey and Madame de Staël used artificial stimulants to increase the sparkle of their imagination. He never seemed to feel the need of increased mental unction. If He ever had any blue Mondays or weary Saturdays, no one seemed to discover the fact. His thought was rapid, splendid, keen as a rapier. Aphorisms, like "Judge not, that ye be not judged," and a dozen more were thrown off as easily as dewdrops throw out the tints of heaven's rainbow. Maxims, like the Golden Rule and the Silver Rule were uttered naturally as the robin sings. Paradoxes, as "He that findeth his life shall lose it, and he that loseth his life shall find it," and beatitudes, which even to-day stir a man to his deepest thought, and innumerable parables (a style of speech which Strauss acknowledged Jesus Himself created)—all these dropped from His lips as easily as rain out of the sky. Such

speech seemed to have been no harder than breathing for Him; yet every sentence flashed like a diamond, and poured the white light of truth upon the subject on which He was conversing

Follow Him in His walks by the wayside, and note His Socratic questioning and counter-questioning, and you must acknowledge that here is repartee of the shrewdest and most brilliant kind.

“What is prayer?” asks one, and He paints the picture of the Pharisee and the publican. “Who is my neighbor?” asks another, and He paints the picture of a man in trouble. Often we need to catch His accent or action to see how adequately His reply meets the question. “Show me the Father,” says Philip. “Have I been so long time with you and hast thou not known *Me*, Philip?” “Good Master, what good thing shall I do that I may have eternal life?” “*Why* callest thou *Me* good?” Notice how He calls attention to the motive of the questioner, and draws attention to Himself when this man asks concerning salvation.

“What shall I do to inherit eternal life?” “How readest *thou*?” Can’t you see His finger point to the phylactery bound on the man’s arm containing Deuteronomy vi, 5, in sacred letters? The Jews were required to repeat that text every morning and

evening. They were better acquainted with that text than with almost any other in the Old Testament. The answer to this lawyer who was "tempting" Him was as brilliant as that of Charles Sumner to the Lord Chief Justice in Westminster Hall, during the trial of an important case, which seemed without precedent. "Can you inform me," said the great English jurist, "whether any American decision has been given upon the point in question?" "No, Your Lordship," said the young American, "but this point has been decided in Your Lordship's own court," in such a case, giving him the citation. That answer made Charles Sumner famous throughout the entire kingdom; but this is almost an exact parallel. "How readest *thou*?" Do not ask me so easy a question. You can answer it yourself. You have been carrying the answer around with you all your life, and have been shouting it on the street-corners twice every day. "How readest *thou*?" Do you wonder that this smart "tempter" went away shamefaced?

Hear in the streets the whispers of the jealous Pharisees, "This fellow casteth out devils by Beelzebub, the prince of devils." "And Jesus knew their thoughts, and said: By whom, then, do your sons cast them out?" This was not an acknowledgment

of the validity of the Jewish exorcists, as has so often been said by commentators who should have known better. It is the shrewdest kind of *argumentum ad hominem*. No one could deny that the power shown by Jesus was incomparably greater than that exhibited by any other. But, if so, what then? Do these others do their works by the power of Jehovah and Jesus by the power of Beelzebub? If you say that, you are affirming that Satan is stronger than God. And they slunk away, not daring to answer His question.

See that Syrophenician woman trying to get to Jesus as He sits at the table. The disciples try to drive her away. "Why will these heathen dogs torment us by their cries? Our Messiah ought not to be troubled by them. They are not worth healing." But now she has reached the table and has kneeled at Jesus' feet and is sobbing, "Have mercy on me, O Lord." What will Jesus do? Will He sympathize with this universal Jewish aversion to these Gentile "dogs?" It seems so. "It is not proper to take the children's bread and throw it to the dogs." Ah! that is what Peter thought. But is it possible that Jesus (even as a test of faith) could ever have called any poor, sorrowing woman a dog? No. It is a shame to the commentators that they have always

believed this. It is not a test of faith to call a woman a dog. Jesus never did it. He was doubtless rebuking the disciples for having done it. He was teaching them a lesson. What He said to the woman was for their ears. "It is not proper to give the children's bread to dogs." Ah! then, Jesus will never do it. That is absolutely certain. See Peter and the others nod their heads approvingly. It is settled then. If it is not a thing proper and right to be done, Jesus can never do it. Even if His heart prompted Him to do it, He would not, He could not. But what is He doing? Look, Peter, and wonder, for the happy heathen mother is receiving not a crumb simply, but the whole loaf from the Divine, loving hand of the world's Christ. What does that mean? It is a proof as clear as language and logic can make it, that this poor heathen worshiper of Beelzebub was not a dog, but a child. The answer to the disciples' whispered affront to one whose religion was less pure than their own was given on the moment, but it was in the form of a blessed syllogism which the world needs yet to ponder with attention.

Even in the instances given we have caught sight of a keenness of repartee which is almost wit. We would call such a man to-day keen-witted. There

was a cleverness, an acuteness, a point, a tooth to His words which like a knife took off the cuticle of His adversaries and turned the laugh of the crowd upon them. Fancy the faces on the outskirts of the crowd when He is interrogated by the chuckling lawyers about paying taxes to Cæsar. How sure the questioners are that they have Him now! If He says "No," He will lose all His influence with the patriotic party; if He says "Yes," He will be guilty of high treason. To lose His popularity or lose His head, that is the dilemma. Yet there is no moment of hesitancy. Cæsar's stamp is on the coin; give to Cæsar what belongs to him. God's stamp is on the man, give to God what belongs to Him. God's coin may fall in the gutter, but the stamp of its creator and rightful owner is still upon it. Give God His own. How swift and virile and unexpected is this home thrust upon these Pharisaic "spies" who had set themselves so high above the publicans and sinners of earth!

And again when they rush pellmell into His presence with the sinful woman whom He could not condemn without usurping the rights of the civil authorities and whom He must condemn or else place Himself in opposition to Moses. How quickly comes the answer, and how quickly afterwards does

the grinning, mocking crowd flinch and shy and shuffle away, while the outsiders at the window laugh them to scorn because of their defeat.

The common people, who were no friends of the pompous scribes and complacent Pharisees must have often been convulsed with amusement at the way their crafty traps were avoided and at the brave satire with which He characterized them. Every word of Jesus brings before the mind a picture vivid as any by Rembrandt. These learned, but unscrupulous theologians are blind leaders of the blind. Can you not see their empty eye-sockets? They are white-washed grave stones. Can you not see the cemetery which is their rightful home? They are wolves in sheep's clothing. Can you not see the wolf's curious nose and ravenous fang peering out from beneath the mask of lamblike innocence?

Here is a man, a member of the Church. He makes long prayers. Yes, he does that, and devours widows' houses, too. Think of that mouthful! See the man trying to pray while the widow's cottage is between his teeth. What a lunch to take on the street corner, between his prayers!

Here is one of the gossips of the town—a man of course. He is the neighborhood faultfinder. He seems to believe that the chief end of man is to

glorify himself and criticise his neighbors. (It is rumored that some of his relatives are living yet.) And Jesus looks at him and says, "He is like a man trying to get a mote out of the eye of a neighbor while a beam is in his own eye." A splinter in the eye is bad enough, but this man has been wounded with a stick of timber, such as Odysseus thrust into the one eye of Polyphemus, the giant Cyclops; and yet, forgetting his own infirmity and his own sad need of immediate surgical assistance, he uses the other eye—which must have been also sympathetically afflicted—in spying upon and ridiculing his neighbor because a piece of shaving or speck of dust has gotten into one of his eyes. Nothing in Hogarth is better than that. It ought to be painted.

Here is another hyper-scrupulous Pharisee; a man so careful in his observance of all the customary forms of religion, that he would not eat anything, even the commonest herb, or even take a dose of medicine without being sure the priest and the temple had the legal tithe; and yet one who daily eateth the bread of iniquity forgetting "righteousness and mercy and faithfulness." And Jesus looks at him and says: "He is like a man drinking water who would strain out the gnat and swallow the camel." What's that? A gnat? I would choke on

that. How could I swallow such a horrible thing? But—but—never mind the camel. Down with it! How unexpected that is!

It is easy to see how in company with congenial friends, this rich imagery, this quaint humor would shine and glow in lively pleasantry of the sweetest, holiest kind. It is true that we never read in the Bible that Jesus smiled; but His words laugh repeatedly. He was no misanthrope or cynic. He who came talking sunbeams no doubt came smiling as the sunshine, and having once caught the idea no one can examine the conversations of Jesus without being impressed by the evidences everywhere of a mellow, twinkling, sparkling, sometimes almost dazzling, humor. Everywhere there is a cheery warmth of fancy, bright flashes of the imagination, happy sallies and plays on words, while many of the parables read like sprightly conundrums. I do not wonder the children loved Jesus, climbed into his arms and followed Him into the temple; I only wonder we did not see sooner that this friend of the children, this welcome guest at feasts and weddings, possessed some such rich talent as this. Indeed, no man could perfectly represent humanity without it.

One other characteristic of this marvelous talker

ought to be mentioned—his chaste and powerful poetic imagination. He is a poet, whether he ever writes a rhythmic verse or not, who has such insight into the meaning and beauty of the commonplace, and such sympathy with Nature and all humanity as Jesus had. Only a born poet could have seen in Nature what He saw. Listen! As He talks you hear the wind blow, and the sound of the storm, and the bleat of the lost lamb on the mountain. Listen! He is talking to the disciples now and His hands are full of lilies, and He says “The flowers have no spinning wheels or looms and yet King Solomon was not so gloriously dressed in his robes of State, woven by royal maidens, as are these”—and as He speaks I can not help seeing His mother’s spindle and distaff and loom and know that these have been chosen by Him for a text from which to teach heavenly lessons. *I hope his mother knew it.*

What a talker! How exhilarating, how stimulating, how beautiful are His words! The lake, the wood, the growing corn, the summer day, the sky of evening, the birds chirping so cheerily, though without barns or granaries, these all talked to Him; and He out of this bright world talked the sunshine and the song of the birds into men’s souls. Jesus

was a poet. His talk was poetry. His life was a poem. He talked both with His lips and with His life, and finally lay down to sleep on the rough bed made from one of the trees He loved so well, in whose very branches the birds may have sung to Him, and from that Tree of Life He still talks with men, and hearts yet burn at His words.

III.

THE BUILDER OF CHRISTIANITY.

“Is not this the carpenter?”—Mark vi, 2.

THESE are the words of the men of Nazareth, astonished at the wisdom and the mighty works of Jesus. Whence hath this village artisan, who has never learned even of the scribes, his unequaled wisdom? Whence hath this man, not even ordained by the temple priests, His power over men and nature, a power which can command even disease and death? The question was pertinent then and is to-day. It is an axiom of reason that every effect must have an adequate cause. But what is the adequate cause behind these mighty works?

Who is this “carpenter” who has built Christianity? This is the question which we consider this morning. I do not intend to go to the Bible for the answer. The Bible has an answer. It tells us that He Himself was the miracle. What He did was the natural outpouring of His supernatural being. It tells us that the stars were interested in His

birth; the students of the skies saw strange sights that night; the splendid Oriental heavens burst into song, and even shepherds could see angels and hear celestial music. Such was His birth, according to the Bible. And this man who was born miraculously, lived miraculously, and having died and lain in the grave "three days," on the first Easter morning, as the sun was about to rise, as the world was getting ready for a new dawn, He came forth from the sealed tomb—as if He were the very monarch of Time and Life—bringing a radiant surprise into the hearts of men and a new morning to the world. That is the Bible story. The apostles believed it. Those believe it now who do not think they know more than the apostles knew about it.

Yet for the present argument we appeal only to the facts every one; even the enemies of Jesus, admits.

The major premise of our argument is this: Christianity is a fact. No one will deny that. Fifty thousand church bells ring out this truth every Lord's day morning; five hundred million adherents to Christ in every land emphasize it. This Christian commonwealth is not a dream like Plato's republic or Sir Thomas More's Utopia; it is a fact. Our first proposition then is simple. The building is majestic; it must have had a builder.

Consider the beauty, grandeur, stability of this Christian temple. Its foundation pillars were laid in the Augustan age. That age was famous for its architecture, yet her finest structures are in ruins, while this temple remains new and strong as if it were to endure forever. Within its courts meet together as brothers men of every land and every language. Here may be found the grandest hymns, the choicest art, the noblest literature on the planet. Her walls encircle all the chief centers of civilization and of learning in every land. Her columns rest upon every continent and upon almost every island of the sea as immovably as if grounded upon some Rock of Ages. Who is the builder of this majestic temple? He who built it seems to have had control of the forces of history. Indeed it was Rénan who acknowledged: "All history is incomprehensible without Him." Who is this carpenter who has built this house of mercy called the Christian Church, and has built it as if for eternity? Its shadow falls like a radiance upon the best things and the sweetest things of earth. Who built it? He who was the builder must have been a colossal man, if he were a man.

At the very beginning of this discussion one thing at least may be settled. Christianity is not ex-

plained by crying, Fiction, Legend, Myth. You may tell me that these words of Jesus, these incomparable pearls of wisdom, are forgeries. You may tell me that the history of His life, even the history of Bethlehem and Gethsemane and Calvary and Joseph's Tomb are legends; you may tell me that even this face shining upon us from the Gospels, a face so pure that the world still blushes as it looks upon it, is a creation of the imagination; but this does not explain the fact that there is a Christian Church.

It would seem miracle enough to invent such a character as this of Christ revealed in the Gospels; to paint this face which looks out upon the world like the face of a seraph from a herd of swine (and the more the artists and the farther removed from any original, the greater the miracle); but you are going too far when you say this imaginary hero built Christianity. You might as well say that Hamlet built the royal palace in Copenhagen, or Uncle Tom liberated the slaves.

It would be a miracle, indeed, if men like these, Matthew the publican, for example, so devoid of all patriotism that he could act as tax collector from his own people, taking office under the heathen tyrants, a man whose word could not be

received under oath in the courts of that day—it would seem almost a miracle if such a man as he could originate this ideal personality, whose life even to-day skeptics acknowledge to be the perfect model of a perfect man, stainless, pure, imperial, divine,—and invent words for his lips which for twenty centuries have shone like apples of gold in pictures of silver.

It would be miracle enough if men like Peter, a blustering, swearing sailor, and James and John, poor illiterate fishermen, narrow and intolerant and sinful, according even to the report of their best friends—that these men with the smell of the bait on their hands, could invent such a character as this of Jesus—this absolutely unique pattern of manhood—putting into His lips words that have made Him the teacher of philosophers, and imagining for Him answers to the most profound questions of ethics and theology, which are still the most satisfactory known to twentieth-century scholarship. This would be hard enough to believe, but one is going too far when he says it was this “man of the imagination” who built Christianity and then created out of the very men who lied this imaginary hero into existence, apostles and saints and martyrs, and is yet able—this same man of the im-

agation—even to-day, to ennable and transform mean men into saints and small men into men of might, so that, even according to the acknowledgment of pronounced skeptics, the world's future depends on the way humanity continues to be molded by this Christ of the Gospels!

“The world sits at the feet of Christ
Unknowing, blind, and unconsoled;
It yet shall touch His garment's fold
And feel the Heavenly Alchemist
Transform its very dust to gold.”

That is the hope of the world to-day, even His enemies being the judges. Now it is miracle enough to say that the Jesus of the Gospels is a man of the imagination, but you go too far when you affirm that this fictitious hero could transform even the men who invented Him into mighty forces of holiness, and that through these agents this same imaginary being could pour “a tide of youth and rapture” into the “wasted veins” of humanity and build Christianity—the religion of the Sunrise and the Spring. Fictitious heroes are not good carpenters. Even the greatest creations of Shakespeare carry no hammers. He who built this majestic Christian cathedral must have had a mighty mind

and a strong arm, for it seems built of eternal granite, not of such stuff as dreams are made of.

Our second proposition is equally simple with the first. Jesus, the only assigned personal builder of this world's wonder, as a man only, was inadequate to the task.

The general conditions of the life and times of Jesus are denied by no scholar. The heathen testimonies of His character and His work begin within forty-five years of His death, while His home and country and age are opened to our view by many contemporary writers. We know almost as much about the environment of this Man of Nazareth as about the environment of George Washington. If Jesus, the human carpenter, built Christianity, we want to ask where He was born, who were His allies, what were His advantages. For if this were not a supernatural work by a supernatural character, it was a natural work which is to be accounted for by natural laws and natural surroundings. Perhaps, as some have intimated, He was simply a growth from the soil, the natural product of His country and home, the genius of His time incarnate.

Let us look at His country and home. The country in which He lived was about one-fourth the size of the State of Illinois. He never went

out of it, except for a brief period as a babe. Plato sought the cosmopolitan spirit in foreign lands. Jesus had none of the culture and breadth obtained by travel. The man who crosses his State at the narrowest breadth has gone farther in a night than Jesus ever traveled in His life. And do you realize how destitute was His native country of all that we call civilizing and refining influences? Look out upon it. Fields in which the farmer uses no drill or reaper or mower or thresher, not even a scythe; but plows the earth with a crooked stick, reaps the grain with a sickle or pulls it up by the roots, threshes it with a flail, winnows it by tossing it in the air, and then, as his only granary, buries it in the ground. Towns like Nazareth, with filthy streets so narrow that two laden donkeys can scarcely pass each other—so narrow that even in Jerusalem, the capital city, all vehicles were forbidden by law to run in the streets until evening after the travel had ceased—no electric lights, no street lamps of any kind, only torches in the hands or lamps fastened to the sandals. No sidewalks, so that it is easy for any night traveler to fall into the ditch; no police, no sewers, but outside of every large town some *gehenna*, where the rubbish and filth are burned. The town itself, only

a collection of one-story houses of mud or rough stones or sunburned brick, easily washed or blown away.

And in one of these He lived, this man whom even the modern Voltaire has declared to be the “creator of civilization!” Enter His home. We know just the kind of a home it was. It was no mansion. It was scarcely equal to the adobes of the Pueblo Indians—a little, low, one-story cabin, with mud floor and straw roof, parlor, sitting-room, bedroom, stable all in one. There was no window, no fireplace or stove or chimney—only three or four stones laid close together—no bed, only a mat on the floor. The furniture was scanty; a half dozen copper and clay vessels, a chest, perhaps a loom, a bread basket, a broom, two stones used in grinding corn, a bushel, and a lamp; “the lamp,” the Greek says, for in poor homes such as Jesus knew, they had but one. The “bushel” covered the lamp in the daytime and acted as lamp-stand at night. The food was meager; no knives and forks at the table; even at the Last Supper, the disciples with their fingers dipped the bread into the common sop. Such was His home! What would you expect as the natural outcome of such an environment—a world Teacher “never to be surpassed?”

Remember, Nazareth was no Athens. It had no art galleries, no libraries, no universities or academies, no school at all. In the synagogue or at home the children were taught to read and write and probably to cipher, and in pious homes were taught the Scriptures. But there was no public school in Nazareth, not even a primary school until two generations after the birth of Jesus. Even if there had been a rabbinical school, with its teaching that "if a Gentile fall into the sea a Jew must not pull him out; thou shalt not be guilty of thy neighbor's blood, but a Gentile is not thy neighbor," would it have been a good preparation for the Founder of a world religion? Was Palestine accustomed to turn out such carpenters? Was this man the natural product of the soil? "A morsel of bread from a Samaritan is as swine's flesh," says the Talmud; yet He talked with the woman of Samaria, giving her the first revelation of His Messiahship, and chose a Samaritan as His ideal of brotherhood!

Macaulay says the age forms the man, but after carefullest study I almost believe no human influence but would have hindered the growth of this man were He a man only. Some one may point as an exception to this, to his pious relatives, but if He were a man only His father was weak and foolish, and the less

said about His mother the better. Nay, if a man only, then He was not even a good man, for He claimed to forgive sin and to work miracles, to give away places in heaven, and to be God's representative on the earth. To be sure, even the skeptics declare that He was the ideal of religion and humility, but it is a curious thing that this most humble and pious man never repented of sin, never acknowledged that he could possibly be wrong, and made Himself the center of all His teaching. If He were only a man, then was He a false man, deceiver or deceived. Could a false man have built Christianity? Why, as Carlyle somewhere says, a false man can not even build a good house, for presently the house he pretends to build tumbles into a rubbish heap.

Let us ask again, was Palestine accustomed to turn out such carpenters? We have a description of His neighbors from men who knew them well. Tacitus speaks of them as "the very scum of slavery," and Cicero said, "These natives of Syria are born only to be slaves." They were all under the yoke—Jesus and all. But the Galileans were despised even by their countrymen of Judea, as bigoted and ignorant and bloody. Even in Jerusalem, as we know from contemporaneous sources, these

neighbors and companions of Jesus were called "Galilean blockheads."

Who is this man, this Galilean, who grows up in such a home, among such influences, and comes forth, not a Galilean, not a Jew, not an Oriental, but the Man, Son of Humanity and Brother of the race—comes forth to be the teacher of nations and to originate new standards of culture? Who is this who claimed to be the Son of God and the Savior of men, and of whom even the skeptics acknowledge, "If ever the Divine did appear upon earth it was in His person?" If I call Him God to-day, it is not because of any cunning application of Greek syntax or by a manipulation of so-called proof texts, but because the miracle of His character and life and power, even in death—and after it—compels the same cry that came from the lips of those who knew Him best, "My Lord and my God!" The question must be answered. He asks it to-day as in the olden times, "Who do men say that I am?" Who is this Jesus of the crystal heart, who is not a captain, not a priest, not a rabbi, only a carpenter—but the builder of Christianity?

The builder of Christianity, how much that means! No common carpenter could rear this temple. Its pillars, the Bible and the human conscience;

its foundation, the stone rolled from an empty grave; its roof high as heaven, brilliant with the stars of eternity. A man only build this temple? What a carpenter He must have been! See Him yonder—that man with rough hands, dreaming as He works. What is it this young man proposes to do? Ah, a gigantic dream is in His breast. Listen! He stands at the door of His humble workshop, brushing the shavings from His hair as, looking towards the setting sun, He dreams a dream of power. What is it? Does He hope to be a master carpenter? Does He hope to study in the school of Jerusalem and become a rabbi some day? Or does He dare to dream that He may become ruler of the synagogue, or possibly high priest? Foolish boy! He has no teacher, no great friends, no money. It can not be.

Still he dreams—this carpenter. It is a dream of world conquest. He is to be the greatest captain of Israel, who shall conquer the earth, commanding more powerful armies than Alexander the Great. Insane ambition! Why, this youth has not even a sword!

Hark! “All the future is mine. A cup of cold water offered to me will make the giver famous to the end of the world. Abraham was great, and

Moses and David and Solomon, but I shall be greater. The day of my birth will become a festive day the world over, so that all historic epochs will be dated from it. Thousands and millions shall gather every week to speak of Me, Jesus of Nazareth, and give Me worship as to Jehovah Himself." Madness! Have you ever heard the ravings of a maniac? This young man ought not to be allowed at liberty; do you not say so?

He goes forth, this carpenter, speaks to some Jewish fishermen, "Galilean blockheads," as they are called, and says, "Follow Me," and, strangely enough, they do follow, and would lay down their lives for His sake, and in following Him become new men in character and power. The crowds seek Him as if He carries the very bread of life. He speaks of God as Father until men weep and whisper, "This is the vision of God that I craved, not knowing what I craved." He speaks of man as brother, and man begins to sacrifice for man as never before. He speaks of immortality and victory over death, and lo! life gains new charm and value. As He speaks of sin, a new holiness enters the earth; as he speaks of duty, a new courage fills men's souls; as He speaks of man's des-

tiny, the horizons of the planet widen until a new earth comes in sight and a new heaven.

But three years pass, three brief, swift years. He is hunted as a criminal, seized, hung as a laughing stock on the cross.

Ah! the dream was beautiful, so beautiful the world might well have rejoiced to live by it; this dream of love to God and love to man; this dream of sins forgiven and a world redeemed, of a new heart and eternal blessedness; but it is only a dream. The bubble is burst; the dream is ended, a Galilean on the cross, a dead man on the gallows—that is the end of it all!

What? Do you tell me that dead man has a kingdom? That He is a leader of armies; a greater conqueror than Alexander; a teacher of nations more successful than Socrates; His pupils more celebrated than the greatest prophets; His birthday honored even by infidels, as the birthday of modern civilization and thought? What? Do you mean to tell me that this dream has crystallized into reality, and that the Carpenter of Nazareth has built a Church, a divine temple, in which for nineteen centuries He has been directing the destinies of men?

Then indeed may we whisper with awed lips: Surely there is some great conspiracy here; this

man must have been in league with the powers that make history and created human nature; the government is on His shoulder; the universe is on His side.

Who is this carpenter who could dream this dream of infinite love and have it come true; who could make plans for future millenniums as if for to-morrow, and carry out His plans; who never wrote a line, but whose name fills all libraries; who never went to college, but who in three years taught the world more than all His predecessors for three thousand years and all His successors for two thousand years, even His enemies being the judges? Who is this out of whose life has flowed the Gulf Stream of history, changing the moral and religious temperature of the planet, warning every heart and nation it has touched? Who is this carpenter who has built for Himself a sacred temple out of the broken fragments of a ruined humanity? Is it not the same divine Carpenter, the almighty Builder of the Universe, who formed the vault of the sky and the dome of the human mind, who having built the Christian Church, will yet build mansions in heaven for those who trust Him?

IV.

THE CROSS.

“Having made peace through the blood of his cross.”

—Col. i, 20. *Come, take up the cross and follow me.”*—Mark x, 21.

THE cross was the gallows of the ancient world. It was a strange symbol for a conquering religion—as strange as if the United States should have chosen the whipping-post or gibbet instead of the eagle—but it was a symbol of Christ’s own choosing. The Gospel of Jesus is emphatically the Gospel of the cross. Do we realize how old the symbol of the cross is? It was not invented yesterday. The lamb of God was slain before the foundation of the world (Rev. xiii, 8) and the cross as a religious symbol seems almost as old as the race.

There is an ancient legend that the center post which upheld the roof of Noah’s ark, that “great vessel of salvation,” was cross-shaped and grew from a seed which Adam carried with him out of Paradise, a seed from the Tree of Life. It was

from a branch of this same tree that Hiram of Tyre cut the great cross-shaped beam which he sent to Solomon to be the central support of the temple, but which the builders rejected, and not finding any place where it would fit cast it outside the city walls. There it lay untouched through the centuries until in the haste of the crucifixion cruel hands seized it and nailed Jesus upon it.

The cross has always had a mysterious significance. It would almost seem as if the human soul was built to expect something from this strange and mystic sign. Did you ever visit the cliff dwellings of Southern Colorado? If so you have noticed the constant use of the cross in their constructions, evidently with some religious meaning attached to it. When the Spaniards came to Peru and Mexico they found the Incas and Aztecs reverencing the cross and saying that they had received this symbol from an earlier civilization. In a ruined city of Central America, a city which was covered with forests when this new world was discovered, an altar has recently been uncovered on which is sculptured a cross before which a worshiper is represented bringing offerings. In ancient India, Phoenicia, Babylon, Egypt, everywhere, we find the cross receiving peculiar honor millenniums before the Christian era.

And what meaning did these widely separated races and civilizations attach to this symbol? Ah! the answer to that question is even more astonishing. The very soldiers who crucified our Lord would place, after a battle, the Greek Theta, denoting death, before the names of those killed, and the Greek Tau (cross), denoting life, before the names of those who yet lived. So among the Hebrews, it was the cross marked upon the forehead which saved the godly inhabitants of Jerusalem from the destroying angel (*Ez. ix, 4*) ; the spit on which the Jews roasted the lamb of the Passover was cross-shaped and the blood struck on the lintel and door posts of the houses in Egypt formed the outline of a cross. So among the Druids this strange symbol represented "life," or the way of life. In Egypt it had the same meaning, and on the famous Rosetta stone it is this very hieroglyphic cross which is employed by the sculptor, two centuries B. C., as exactly equivalent to the Greek word in the parallel column "immortality." That was the translation of this mystic sacred sign even then, and so untold ages before this when the prehistoric peoples of North Italy slept in death they put upon their funeral urns this same protective, triumphing symbol. Strange, impressive, universal, world-wide

symbol of something never realized until Jesus Christ brought life and immortality to light, coming forth from the grave on the resurrection morning, as pictured in the Catacombs, bearing His cross upon His shoulder in triumph.

The cross as the sign of life seems to be almost as old as the race. And this principle of vicarious sacrifice for which the cross of Christ stands is graven deep in all nature. Some one has wisely said, "We are all the living children of a world that has died for us." So the earth itself only lives because of the life which the sun gives it; and astronomers are now engaged in calculating how much longer the sun can continue thus to pour out its strength before it too will hang dead, its life sacrificed for others.

The principle of the cross is also cut deep into human nature. The beasts, as Walt Whitman says, never lie awake nights moaning over their sins and looking up above the stars for forgiveness. But man wherever you find him—however far back towards the birthday of the race, however low down in the scale of civilization—may be seen speaking into the unseen, whispering prayers for pardon and bringing sacrifices of atonement. Man's eyes have always naturally opened upward. He has never believed

that his only environment was of the earth, earthly. And it is a solemn and suggestive fact that man has always sought to open correspondence with that unseen world behind the stars by bringing a lamb of sacrifice in his hand. It seems as if the human soul was built to need this. Nature, when it produced this curious religious machine which we call the human heart and conscience, so built it that it naturally works in this way; feeling after God and expecting an answer, though knowing itself degenerate.

The last point is especially remarkable since there is no such instinct in any other creature. A degenerate animal never seeks to regain its lost powers and is never able to do so. When an animal "misses the mark" he has missed it forever. He can never recover himself. The barnacle ceased to use its powers of sight and locomotion and lost them—lost even the power to carry food to the mouth and finally lost the mouth itself, and lost these organs and powers forever. The whale was once a true quadruped, but it took to the easy, selfish life of the sea and sank in the scale. There is no instance known in the animal world of lost powers regained; of recovery after the creature deteriorates. But man has ever felt, as if by instinct,

that though he was out of harmony with himself and the universe, and though he had sadly deteriorated, having lost even since childhood spiritual sensitiveness and strength, yet through the innocent blood of the sacrifice which he brought in his hand, he might reach a reconciliation (at-one-ment) with the unseen Ruler above him and the unseen monitor within him.

Yet can anybody now believe that pardon of sin ever came or could come through the death of an animal? That was simply the picture lesson, the type, the shadow of something so great that no human speech could utter it. For untold millenniums the sacrificial lamb heralded something to come. All systems of ancient sacrifices, heathen as well as Hebrew, received their interpretation when the spotless Lamb of God was slain. The law was the world's schoolmaster to bring it to Christ.

I do not mean that it was a prophecy. It was better than a prophecy. It was the expression of an eternal principle of truth placed in man's mind by the builder of man's mind, a principle which sprang out of God's own heart and which He sought to plant in man's heart; viz., that life (physical, mental, spiritual, eternal,) can come only through the sacrifice of life; that he who would save others can not

save himself; that it is divine to pour out one's life to strengthen and save the weak and the sinful.

Sin! Sin! Sin! Help! Help! Help! This is the cry of humanity from its best representatives. The Atonement was God's answer to this cry, and like all God's answers it was ready before the cry for help came. (Rev. xiii, 8.) The tragic fact of human sin and helplessness brought to light God's eternal plan for the recovery of the race. If there is no sin there is no need of a savior. If the sin is not appalling and deadly, there is no need of such a Savior. Any system which denies the "sin of the world" must also deny the "Lamb of God." The closer the prophets got to God the more they felt the abysmal fact of sin. Jesus saw more sin in the world than any one else. Every angry thought looked to Him like murder; every unclean thought an unspeakable crime. The cross shows what Jesus thought about sin. Sin is so deadly that even God could not bear it away from His beloved without the cross. Only thus could this leprosy be taken away and the springs of our being become purified.

The Gospel of Jesus is the Gospel of the cross.

The cross is the pole of the spiritual Cosmos. Cut the cross out of the Bible and it falls to pieces like any other old book. Cut the cross out of Chris-

tianity and it becomes a superstition, a fable, a delusion, an hypocrisy. Cut the cross out of history and it becomes a locked labyrinth of horror and mystery without a key.

What then is the Christian meaning of "the cross?" What do we mean by atonement and salvation "by the blood of the cross?" The cross is the symbol of life wrought through death; of salvation wrought through self-forgetfulness and uttermost outpouring of self for the good of others. It was not Christ's broken body which was the real sacrifice. The true sacrifice of God is a broken spirit. Jesus poured out His soul, unto death, for the good of others. I do not pretend to understand all the depth of meaning in that death on Calvary, when the divine sacrifice became sin for us. But one thing is certain; that death was necessary. God would never have allowed it otherwise. It was not accidental, it was not superfluous, it behooved Him to suffer. I do not mean that it was necessary because of a tangle in God's plan which it only could unravel. Humanity ought not to charge lack of foresight against the Omniscient, or lack of power against the Omnipotent. It was not necessary because God's law was in danger or God's government

would totter unless somebody suffered. The Atonement was not necessary for God (except as His own heart compelled it), but it was necessary for man because nothing short of this divine love-offering could break down the barrier of man's guilt and lack of feeling and growing brutishness which separated him from the vision and likeness of God (*i. e.*, salvation).

The cross was the "divine heart-break" over human sin. The Atonement was not an arbitrary scheme to meet an emergency; but the natural outpouring of God's eternal nature which meets a response in human nature, since humanity is kin to God. The necessity of the Atonement was not artificial, or perhaps even judicial; it was a necessity of love since only thus a man such as I am—debased, ungrateful, sullen, rebellious—can be won to the new manhood revealed in Jesus.

It was impossible without the lowering of all morals, for God to pardon rebellious and impenitent man without lifting him to a new spiritual character. It was absolutely necessary that a repentance adequate to the change of character be secured. The cross secured this. The death of Jesus was dynamic. This was God's way of working in the sinful soul such a shame of sin, conviction of duty and

consciousness of God's uplifting presence as should revolutionize and transform the soul.

I do not like the theories which seek to explain why just so many groans and so many spasms of pain came to Jesus on the cross as He tried to work out a "scheme" of atonement; to make the ever-loving Father willing to forgive sinners and the Almighty Lawgiver able to forgive. You can not explain that agony in mathematical terms any more than you can the cry of the mother over her lost boy. It was not a balancing of accounts between God and man; much less between God and Satan. It was the heart-break of love over the erring child. I think of the Atonement as a fact so great and far-reaching that no human thought can compass it and no human language symbolize it, a fact eternal as the being of God, a thought vast as the orbit of the divine love.

That is the reason we have had so many theories of the atonement. When some great thinker has been able to see clearly a little fragment of that sublime circle of grace he has been able to establish a powerful theology. These concepts of the Atonement differ and none are adequate because each thinker sees so small a part of the "vision splendid"—and even what he sees blinds him with its glory

and he comes down from his contemplation of this highest revelation of Deity crying, "Unspeakable, unspeakable!" Human language even at its best is too poor, too humanly imperfect, to express completely even our best feelings and conceptions, much less this deepest revelation of the Infinite mind. Every word is a metaphor and no words can adequately explain the august and divine work which Christ did on the cross.

So even the inspired writers when they sought to describe and explain the mystery of redemption through the cross (which even the angels could not understand fully) piled phrase on phrase and metaphor on metaphor in a vain attempt (through this necessarily imperfect medium of human speech) to utter the fullness of meaning in this unspeakable tragedy of the cross. I do not suppose it was ever intended by those inspired writers that these vivid pictures of man's uttermost sin and helplessness and Christ's uttermost ability to help through the cross, should be treated as if they were university definitions of the Atonement or legal papers explaining the method of it. But they have been so understood. It is through an undue emphasis of some of these apostolic pictures (which do express truth; but were never meant to be scholastic formularies

of a theory) that the various “schemes” of the atonement have arisen.

Man is a Samson, bound in sin grinding in the prison house; but Christ on the cross is his Savior and deliverer. Man has been captured by that arch robber, sin, but Christ can pay the ransom and purchase his redemption. Man is a child justly deserving the father’s anger; but Jesus propitiates the Father and brings the wanderer home. Man is in his grave, dead in trespasses and sins, putrifying as Lazarus was, but Jesus from His cross can cry “Come forth,” and the dead will live. Man is starving, but Jesus is the bread of life. Man is dying of leprosy, but Christ is the Heavenly Physician who can cure and wash away all the foulness, making him whiter than snow. Man is a rebel, justly condemned to capital punishment, but Jesus is the sufficient Mediator. Man is a criminal and the law must be vindicated; but Jesus on the cross becomes his substitute bearing his sins in His own body on the tree. Man is a sinner, but Jesus on the cross is the scapegoat to bear away his iniquity or the sin-offering accepted as its atonement.

Such are some of the vivid pictorial illustrations used in the New Testament to emphasize the need of the cross and its absolute suf-

ficiency to help and save. But these word pictures have been metaphysically analyzed until they have often represented the Father as antagonistic, not only to man, but to his best beloved Son, or until Satan has been elevated as a rival of Deity; or God's law has been thought of as being above its author, and God has been represented as not really forgiving man his sins, but as exacting every ounce of the penalty, but exacting it from the person innocent of the crime. Such theories could not be true. They are due largely to a misunderstanding of the picturesque language used by Jesus and His apostles.

In saying this there is no intention of speaking disrespectfully of the makers of these old theories. They were greater men than any who now criticise them—incomparably greater than those who select one or two phrases which illustrate the moral influence of Christ's death and therefore leap to the conclusion that this is all there was to it. No, there is a mystery here too deep for human thought to fathom, too deep for human speech to utter. The fact that these old theories have had such power shows that they are in touch with infinite truth. Even the worst theory of the atonement, when joined to reverent faith in Christ as a personal Sav-

ior, makes noble men. It was the distrine of the cross (sometimes in its crudest form) which, even its enemies being the judges, has “wrought the mightiest enterprises of Christian history, encouraged the loftiest martyrdoms for humanity’s uplift, and aroused the strongest, most original, and purest impulses of the human soul.” Such is the acknowledgment which a leading representative of liberalism has recently made. But if that is true, unless God is dead or has nothing to do with the course of the world’s history, the Infinite Will must have been behind this exaltation of the cross.

The preaching of the cross may seem to some foolishness and to others a stone of stumbling; but to the man, helpless and dying and sick of sin, it has been proved historically to be the power of God unto salvation. The cross of Christ does break rebellious hearts and work mighty transformations in the human soul. Tens of thousands in glory now were changed from proud, brutal, sensual, men into a gentle and Christlike manhood, where they could say in the language of that hymn which Matthew Arnold called the finest in the English language,

“When I survey the wondrous cross
 On which the Prince of glory died,
My richest gain I count but loss
 And pour contempt on all my pride.”

We can not explain the Atonement. To explain it would be to deny it. Everything that God does has in it the inexplicable. We can not understand even the "flower in the crannied wall," much less this scarlet flower of Paradise Regained. We can not explain one grain of sand on the sea shore; how then can we explain this corner-stone of the City of God? No theory can adequately measure the mighty fact which is divinely shadowed in all the theories and expressed to the heart of man by the thrilling heart pictures of sin and need and uttermost salvation which fill the New Testament.

But one thing we can be sure of; these Bible writers tell us the truth, even if we have misunderstood them sometimes. The apostles were not mistaken when they made the cross the remedy for sin. There is no other. For whatever may be said of modern knowledge and ancient ignorance, it can hardly be doubted by any one who does not think of himself more highly than he ought to think, that the apostles knew more about the deep things of religion and had keener insight into the divine thought of redemption, than any one who has since spoken on the subject.

Another thing we can be sure of. It was the author of a Father's heart who was the author of

the plan of redemption and therefore any theory of the atonement, any explanation of Scripture words or images, which contradicts God's justice or His Fatherly love, must be wrong.

And of one other thing we may be sure—that the power of the cross lies in its ability now to change the personality of men. The atonement is not something outside of us which leaves ourselves unchanged. Redemption through the cross is worked within us. This is the way God can be just and yet the justifier of the ungodly—because, through the cross, he can transform the ungodly and turn sinners into saints. The cross—the principle of vicarious sacrifice—is a regenerative principle now. It purges the conscience, it leads to repentance, it breaks down rebellion, it brings sublime aspirations, it changes personality, it brings new powers of victory, it brings fellowship with God and fellowship with man. We conquer, we rise, we reach penitence and self-knowledge and self-victory by the way of the cross. The cross can so change the beast nature of the natural man that any man, the worst man, the most brutish man is made tender and loving and sympathetic and humble and pure when he lets the cross into his life as a ruling passion.

What is the cross? How does it enter the

human soul and set into action these new and powerful motives and affections? The cross is the symbol of the heart-break of love for its beloved. Love is the saving thing. The root principle of the cross is to forget self to help others. It is love, self-forgetful love, and this alone, which is the regenerative germ. The president of one of our largest American universities has recently said that he never knew a bad man saved from a bad life excepting as he was brought under the influence of some one who loved him, believed in him, and sorrowed with him, and thus made him come face to face with his evil self. Thus only can repentance, that standing miracle of earth, begin its mighty work in the human breast.

One other thing we can be sure of. The heart-break of Jesus over men's sins in the effort to save men from their sins stands as the eternal example to us. When Jesus pictured Christians He pictured them always as crucified men and women; having the cross implanted in their very being. In the degree one has the Christ spirit, he will have the cross spirit; for if a man have not the spirit of Christ he is none of His. This is the test as to whether a man is a Christian or not. It is the test the Master Himself established. We have not accepted the cross or

accepted Christ, unless we have accepted the self-sacrificing spirit of love for others which Christ had. He laid down His life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. It is this humble self-forgetful spirit, this eager desire to be like Christ in helping others which brings spiritual victory and true fellowship with God. That is what the cross of Jesus means. If we have not that spirit we are only baptized heathens. If we are Christians, Christ calls upon us to carry on His work of saving men by the same method he used, the method of the cross. "For Christ suffered for us, leaving us an example that we should follow His steps."

This is the only way to win the world. The world will be saved by the cross uplifted two thousand years ago only as it sees the same sacrifice of love and life offered daily by those who are crucified with Christ and who are filling up that which was lacking of the sufferings of Christ (Col. i, 24), thus completing the Atonement.

V.

THE DIVINITY OF MAN.

“Ye are Gods.”—Ps. lxxxii, 6. *“Made in the image of God.”*—Gen. i, 27.

THIS is an astonishing declaration, so sensational that if it were not God's word in God's Word, it would be counted rank heresy; a declaration so overlooked and forgotten that some here might wonder whether, after all, it is not a falsehood of Satan instead of being the affirmation of Jehovah. No, it was Jehovah who said “Ye are Gods,” and the term used is the strongest name for God, *Elohim*, the creative name, the very term used in that tremendous statement of Genesis, “In the beginning God (*Elohim*) created the heaven and the earth—and man in His own image.” Really the latter expression, so familiar to us, ought, of itself to have convinced us that man and God are kin; “for,” says the apostle (and he was talking to heathen) “we are His offspring.” God is not a foreign potentate and arbitrary lawgiver; He is a relative.

Man has a divine origin. That is true by whatever method God created him. I am not saying anything against evolution as a method of divine creation. As Drummond says, a miracle is not something done quick. If God took an eternity in which to develop this *elohim*, instead of creating him in a minute, that would only show in another way the worth of the man from the standpoint of the Creator. But this I do insist upon that man when he first appeared was not simply a featherless biped, a sorry sort of a brute, differing only from other animals in the shape of his thumb or an additional convolution of the brain. Man, when he first appeared, was man, divinely created, divinely endowed, a "clothed eternity," as Emerson called him, with the currents of the universe flowing through him and having the Creator as his nearest relative. It was not the brute that was his father, but God. When you read man's genealogical table you may find criminals and idiots in the list, and for all I know, somewhere in the list the tiger or the ape; but earlier than the criminal, earlier than the tiger or the ape, earlier than the fire-mist or the protoplasmic jelly, you will find as the first ancestor of the race —God.

He has been with man ever since. We have

thought of God too often as a wonder worker, only needed on special occasions or to fill gaps not yet quite occupied by the laws of nature; forgetting that the laws of nature are but God's way of doing things, and that the best proof of God's presence is not a cataclysm or some unexpected novelty of activity but the Universe; the regularity, the order, the power of which are due to His presence. In Him all things live and move and hold together. He is not a great God who took dust once and breathed life into it and let it go; He is the ever-present God, as much needed to explain the dust as the man, as much needed now, and as active now as in the days of creation or in the Mosaic era.

“A fire-mist and a planet,
A crystal and a cell,
A jelly-fish and a saurian,
And caves where the cave-men dwell.
Then a sense of law and beauty,
And a face turned from the clod,—
Some call it evolution,
And others call it God.

Like tides on a crescent sea-beach,
When the moon is new and thin,
Into our hearts high yearnings
Come welling and surging in;
Come from the mystic ocean,
Whose rim no foot has trod,—
Some of us call it longing,
And others call it God.”

I do not, therefore, know or care how God created man; but I do know that when God created him he was not brute, but man; the prince of creation, the image of God. When Pompey entered the Holy of Holies in Jerusalem he was surprised that in it he found no image of Deity, but the Hebrews knew what Pompey did not, that man was God's image. This is Bible theology. This is twentieth-century philosophy. If man's mind were not kin to God's mind he could not understand God. If man's moral nature were not kin to God's he could not obey, he could not commune. If man's affections were not kin to God's these two could not love each other. Man is normally the image of God. God's name is written deep in his nature. Jesus taught this in that much misunderstood parable of the lost coin. The name on human nature is as distinct as Cæsar's name on the penny. Man belongs to God. He is degraded, fallen, crippled; so soiled and sensual and selfish and savage, so worldly and flippant and brutish, so close to the dirt,

“He hangs between
In doubt to deem himself a god or beast.”

That is history. That is experience. That is true personally, nationally, racially. To seek in the past of this foul world a holy man who has not lost the

image of divinity is like seeking the “fossil remains of an angel in a bed of coal.” Man is degraded; but he is not a degraded animal. He is a degraded spirit. Sanco Panza remarked that men were as God made them, and sometimes a great deal worse. He is degraded. But there is hope, since God has hope for him. None so hopeful as God. None so sure of his ascent as God and those who hear God’s voice.

Goethe said, “Man would become more clever, more acute; but not happier or better or stronger.” Rénan, so optimistic in his early life, declared at last, “Civilization is a failure, human nature is a failure.” Even Professor Huxley, who for so many years cheered the world with the assurance that evolution was the savior of the race, even he finally came to believe that the study of human history was “unutterably saddening,” with no good prospect ahead, the entire “cosmic process” being not only non-moral, but immoral. Did not an ancient prophet once declare that he that is without God soon comes to be also without hope in the world? The man of the future, as pictured by such scientists, will continue to lose the organs he does not use, and since he does not now have to gnaw bones, like the gorilla, his teeth will grow worse and worse till they drop

out; since long hair and beard and mustaches are all “ornaments acquired by man to charm and allure the opposite sex,” and since these are no longer needed for that purpose—as even a bald-headed man with intellect and wealth counts for more in these days than some other one with the longest kind of whiskers—and since the railroads and the street cars have taken away the necessity of traveling long distances afoot, therefore the man of the future, as pictured by pessimistic science, will be a “toothless, hairless, slow-limbed animal, with webbed feet, who will maintain his position in the foremost files of time to come solely upon the strength of one or two peculiar convolutions in his brain.”

It is not a pretty picture. It is not a true picture. Man is not body born of a beast; man is soul, having kinship with the Infinite Soul. The history of man regarded only as a higher beast, without regard to soul, is like the play of Hamlet “with everything left out excepting the ghost.”

“Ye are Gods” (*elohim*), said Jehovah, giving to Him His own creative name as He sent him forth as His representative on this planet. Man is a creator. This world is his creation. It is a very different planet from what it was or could have been if he had not come. I am not sure but if there

are people on Mars they could see the change. You remember the curious suggestion of the scholar who proposed to build an immense construction somewhere, perhaps on the Sahara Desert, representing Euclid's famous theorem, taking it for granted that the Martians would thus know we were signaling them from afar. But we have done better than that. Man has taken deserts, bad as that of Sahara, and changed them till they have become glorious as the Plains of Sharon. He has turned the course of mighty rivers and even of the sea itself. He has built cities like Venice, and republics like Holland, on the very waters of the sea. He has cut vast isthmuses and made islands out of continents. He has accomplished other and greater exploits, though perhaps not so visible to the eye, signaling to other worlds that he is here as *elohim*, creator, ruler, the very image of the omnipotent Creator. He has honeycombed the planet with mines and taken out the hidden treasures hidden there for him alone. He has created flowers from weeds and wholesome foods from poisonous bulbs. He has created new fruits and grains and new soil in which to grow them. He has actually changed some species of birds from granivorous to carnivorous.

God said to man, "Go, subdue, have dominion"

—and man is at it, taking his crown, counted among the *elohim* of the universe. Did you ever think of it? Man is nature's only rival as a mechanic. There are a hundred mechanical contrivances—like the wheel, lever, valve, tube, etc.—which man has originated (not imitated), which are now seen to have been also Nature's, that is God's, inventions first. So akin are these two workers!

Only recently man has begun to think of the atmosphere as his chemical laboratory and to use freely the powers of the storm cloud. He will yet have complete dominion. To make midday at midnight, to converse with a stranger separated from us by two mountain ranges, and see his face as we talk; to heat our homes without fires and cool them at will; all this would have seemed no easier to our grandfathers than to stop a blizzard at command, to control the action of a volcano, or to make a journey to the moon.

But man's greatest possibility lies in a new knowledge of himself. Most people know more of minerals than of men; more about training horses than children. The day is coming when the education of a child will begin at birth; when mothers who, because of their opportunities, ought to be better psychologists than any university professors,

will become not only trained scientific observers of mental phenomena, but directors of it. Even puppies have been so trained that they could surpass many artists in their discrimination between colors, and by this training the brain has been observed to grow enormously. It looks as if man might not only develop the brain he has, but add to it and build up a new brain—and thus practically create a new human race. I hope this may prove true. Man is a spirit, child of the Infinite Spirit, capable of using the best physical machinery with ease; better machinery than he now has.

Man deserves a better body. Did not God mean him to have it? Perhaps God meant him to make it. It is no strange thing, unexpected of God, that human life is expanding, the average age increasing many per cent every decade. Good heredity will completely bar out many diseases and all kinds will be prevented when we learn the right remedies and learn and obey the laws of health. Even now it is rumored that the bacillus of old age has been located and the serum discovered which can check scarlet fever as easily as antitoxin checks diphtheria. It is absolutely true that already our great surgeons have been able to make the blind to see, those blind from their birth; and the deaf to

hear, even with the eardrum gone. A child's life and mental strength has been saved, even after a large part of its brain has been destroyed; and the man with a stab wound in his heart has gotten well. Even the dead child, whose heart has not been beating for an hour, has been brought back to life and given to her mother. A scientist in the Chicago University has even succeeded in taking unfertilized eggs of sea urchins, certain worms, and some lower forms of vertebrates, and by the application of various salts has produced growth and a normal development. That startles many people. It need not. God called man *elohim*, and gave him the world as his dominion. He is simply conquering and taking possession according to God's expressed will.

Man as an animal is losing ground. His sense of smell, his keenness of sight, his strength of limb are not equal to the creatures of the jungle. But man as a spirit is on the gain. He has made arms for himself which can reach across the continent and an ear which can hear a whisper a thousand miles away. He has made a new eye that can see twenty million suns where his grandfather saw only blue sky; an eye so keen that it can not only see the populations in a drop of water but the scales of the

creaturrees that swim in it. He has created a new sense by means of the sensitive photographic plate so that he can now see pictures of worlds too distant for even the largest telescope to reveal them.

Man is a kinsman of the Almighty Creator. Man is not body possessing soul, but soul possessing body, and capable of infinite progression because infinitely endowed. "Ye are Gods," says Jehovah—not actually, but possibly; not yet, but hereafter. Ah, that is the great word. Peter the Great whispered that as his last word on earth—"Hereafter!" Science teaches that only the qualities and powers survive and grow which are to be of service to the creature possessing them. But if that is true, there are almost infinite possibilities ahead for the human race, since even in the hand and brain of the lowest savage there are immeasurable latent powers, powers which have been of no actual use to him nor to any known ancestor. The hand which never carved anything but a war club can become the hand of a sculptor; the voice which seems only fitted to accompany the tom-tom, can become the voice of a poet or philosopher. What shall we say of these latent capabilities? No less a man than Professor Alfred Russell Wallace has distinctly claimed, as a scientific conclusion, that it is not the past but the

future history of the race which explains man's outfit.

The first time man is seen on the planet he possesses powers, capacities, endowments, which even then entitle him to the lordship and dominion of the earth, and man has not yet reached his limit or used all his powers. Again and again we are surprised at some new achievement proving that man is greater in his possibilities than we had before supposed—a power of mastery over the animal kingdom so that by a look or uplifted finger he can turn the wildest beast into an obedient slave; a power of strength, so that in time of stress a weak man finds himself endowed with the strength of ten; a power of memory, so that the ignorant servant girl can repeat pages and pages from a language unknown to her; a mathematical power, so that the little colored boy, who never studied arithmetic, can name by instinct the answer to long calculations before the smartest university man has been able to solve the problem; a power of knowledge, under certain conditions, so great that in the olden time those who possess this hypnotic, mesmeric, telepathic power would have been called wizards and demi-gods; a power over disease, so that by a touch or by mere mental contact many, very many, diseases can be re-

lied. No one doubts that some individuals have such powers, therefore they belong to humanity. This is a part of the dominion God gave to man when He made him in His image and called him *elohim*.

Man has not yet taken his throne; but he will take it. Man has a future. That will be the best part of the world's life.

"Then work and win, for the world is wide
And its doors will open on every side.
Look not on the past with a vain regret,
For the best things have n't happened yet."

That is good Scripture. The Bible is the Book of the Future of Humanity. The Bible tells us where we are going. It proves that science is right when it teaches that all things are rising, that there is "an ascending energy in the universe; every type of life reaches its culmination—a culmination satisfactory to it"—and therefore man will. Without such a future the existence of the race would not be conceivable as a purposeful divine act. Man, as both Scripture and science teach, is the crown and masterpiece of creation, the end of millennium-long processes. But the earth is not man's goal. It is his starting point. No great man feels that he has even tried all his powers, much less reached their limit.

Every great man feels like Victor Hugo when he lay facing death and cried: "I have a future. I know now that I am the chrysalis of an archangel."

Such majestic faculties as man possesses! Yet he is always discontented. He is always crying, "I shall be satisfied when I awake with His likeness!" Nothing less will do. Man is not Deity, but he is the descendant, representative, and heir of Deity, and believes that at his best he can be "partaker of the divine nature." Who is this potency who stretches out his hand and seizes mighty forces for his use, which only God and he can use; who names the planets and fingers the stars and tells what they are made of; whose grasp is felt by the earth and sea and sky and to whom heavenly worlds send messages—even those beyond the power of the telescope to see? Who is he? Let the Bible answer. These are Gods, *elohim*,—not actually, but possibly; not yet, but presently.

This is the infinite outlook of humanity. Man has a million-fold endowment with which to control his million-fold environment. He dominates history. The world is his toolchest; the atmosphere his laboratory, the stars his measuring rod. He is co-worker with God, called by His very name, as by His nature, to be a Creator like his

Father. He is a creator. This is a new earth since he appeared on it. As some one has said his coming changed it more than a new geological era. He has taken continents for his back yard, and seas for his roadways, and the sun for his coal bin. He can even now use the air for his telephone wire and the back of the world to break his electric currents with. He has harnessed the cataract and the lightning as his draught horses, and is now lifting himself into the upper air to make it his highway over the earth. He will soon control the tornado and turn the blast of the hurricane into an æolian harp. He is to have dominion over the earth, the good Book says, and that means over the lifting power of the tide, over the mighty sweep of the waves as they dash up against the beach, over the tremendous potentialities represented by the weight of the ocean, 5,000 feet beneath the surface, and over the as yet unascertained powers of the interplanetary ether—all these he will conquer, he will direct, for as Jehovah made Moses a God unto Pharaoh, so has He made man a God unto this earth and given him dominion and called him by his own mightiest name, *elohim*.

VI.

THE HUMANITY OF GOD.

“And upon the likeness of the throne was the likeness as the appearance of a man above upon it.”

—Ezek. i, 26.

EZEKIEL was the mystic of the Old Testament. He was the profoundest and most exalted thinker among the prophets, unless we except Isaiah at his best. He was a seer of visions more majestic than ever before or ever afterwards met the eye of man until St. John on Patmos saw again that “Glory of God.” There can be no doubt that of all the prophets this is the one the beloved disciple loved best. In St. John’s highest hour of rapture he saw the vision that Ezekiel had seen six centuries before and described it in phrases strikingly similar.

Ezekiel developed a theology in his prophecy so broad, so deep, so sublime, so worthy of Jehovah, that it dominates the human mind even yet. His style of speech was so beautiful that a number of his parables, like those of the vine and the Good

Shepherd, were repeated by Jesus Himself, while his character was so lofty and his relations with God so intimate that He, the One whose name is above every name, chose as His favorite title, the name which Jehovah gave first to Ezekiel, "Son of man." What a man this must have been whom our Lord the Christ should thus choose as His namesake. He was a "man of the Spirit," given up to holy thoughts and heavenly dreams, who has left as his written heritage to humanity this blaze of divine visions—visions so wonderful, so unique, that Schiller said he wished to study Hebrew chiefly because he longed to study Ezekiel in his own language. He has well been called the "Shakespeare of the Hebrews."

Yet who reads Ezekiel? Do you? Like his namesake, despised and rejected of men while he lived, it is also true that this "labyrinth of the mysteries of God" which we call the Book of Ezekiel, is neglected by Christians more than perhaps any other book of the Bible. One reason for this, no doubt, is the difficulty in understanding the meaning of these visions in which all the majesties and splendors of earth and heaven seem thrown together in such rich confusion. Few men in this hasty age care to take the time and pains needed to understand any great thinker. So although no man but Moses in all the

Hebrew history can compare with Ezekiel in the work he did for his nation, he being the organizer and lawgiver and deliverer of the Israel which was buried in captivity in Babylon as Moses was the organizer and lawgiver and deliverer of the Israel which was buried in Egypt, notwithstanding this we Christian people have neglected the Book, though full of spiritual treasure because it has been hard to understand.

The key to the book is this vision of God's glory from which we have taken our text. Ezekiel and the better part of the nation were captives in Babylon. The Israelitish nation had been humiliated and conquered. The temple of Jehovah had been desecrated and the holy city almost destroyed. It seemed as if Jehovah could not protect His own. It seemed as if the gods of Babylon were stronger than He. The discouraged captives in a strange land looked about them and saw a finer civilization, a more splendid scholarship, a more impressive art and architecture than they had ever seen before, while the gorgeous religious ritual and the honor offered everywhere by these superior people to Bel-Marduk, the great god of Babylon, necessarily brought home to these poverty-stricken captives from the mountain land, the question whether after all they had better

not give up their faith in their ancestral God and settle down to enjoy wealth and culture under the favor of the god of this greatest kingdom of the earth.

It was a vast temptation. Many of the people yielded to it. We know the names of many Jews who settled down in Babylon and could not be induced to go back to Jerusalem, even when Cyrus permitted them to do so. They took Babylonian names and married Babylonian wives, and offered libations to the Babylonian god of "Good Luck," and went into commercial enterprises trying their best to forget that they ever had been Hebrews and ever had worshiped the little God of their little native country. They are not to be blamed more than others for that. They were not alone in that apostasy. A dozen nations peopled the streets of those great cities along the Euphrates, and not one nation, save this, has ever been heard of since. A dozen religions were buried under the glorious conquests of the kings who worshiped Bel-Marduk, and no one of them has ever had a resurrection. Who could dream that the insignificant nation of Israel would ever get a chance to return to its own home, or that the conquered God of that little country of Palestine, hardly big enough to be a good-sized

county in some of our States, would ever again lift up his humiliated head?

Then it was that Ezekiel had his vision of the "Glory of Jehovah"—a God as glorious on the Chebar as on the Jordan—a mighty God whose going forth is preceded by the whirlwind and the tempest, and whose throne is encircled with flashing cycles of fire, full of eyes, while above it glows the rainbow, the ancient symbol of God's covenant with His people.

Ezekiel sees more than this as he looks more intently at Jehovah's throne. It seems to be carried in a chariot—this throne upon which He sits—but it is a living chariot composed of splendid forms with strange animal faces, whose limbs and feet shine like burnished brass, and the sound of their wings as they move like lightning-flashes is as "the sound of great waters, as the voice of the Almighty." What are these living forms which uphold Jehovah's throne? Ezekiel looks again, and I can see a strange light come into his eye as he recognizes the eagle, the special representative of the great national god of Assyria, and also the special symbol of Shamash, the Babylonian god of life. He sees, too, the ox or bull, the well-known symbol of Marduk, most revered of all the Babylonian pantheon, and

the lion, symbol of Nergal, the chief god of the Babylonian underworld.

What does it all mean? And I catch my breath even now with excitement as I think of Ezekiel, the despised captive priest of a despised and conquered god, looking at that vision and reaching the tremendous conclusion that Jehovah, the God of Israel, is the God of the whole earth, infinitely above these deities of Babylon. Before the eagle and the ox and the lion the whole population of the earth at that very time were prostrating themselves, even the great king of Babylon, bowing himself in abject fear before them and covering his body with amulets to escape their fury. But now Ezekiel sees that these are all servants of Jehovah, implicitly obeying him, humbly honoring him; these greatest Babylonian gods that were supposed to control the powers of life and death and the underworld were fit only to act as draught horses for this greatest God, Jehovah,—bound as obedient captive slaves to his chariot wheels!

Never was the Hebrew people so tempted as in Babylon, because of its brilliant civilization, to accept also its fascinating idol worship which controlled the wealth and fashion of this most famous capital of the earth. But Ezekiel's vision saved the

nation from this. They went into Babylon idolators; a people which had in almost every generation previously sunk into some form of idol worship. They came out of captivity ready to die for their immovable faith in the all-powerfulness of the one God for whom the gods of the heathen served but as a footstool.

But Ezekiel's vision of God is not yet described fully. He has told of the four living creatures and the flashing wheels, wheel in wheel, and the glorious throne set upon this living chariot, and then he pauses too amazed to tell what else he sees—until at last out of his astonished lips, comes the utterance, "And I saw the likeness of the throne and upon the likeness of the throne was the likeness as the appearance of a man above upon it." Ah! I do not wonder Ezekiel hesitated to tell it. No wonder that he felt himself compelled to repeat again and again that he only claimed to have seen the "appearance of the likeness" of a man on God's throne; for no one in all the earth for six centuries to come could understand the vision. It almost seemed a blasphemous thing to say that even in vision he had seen a man upon Jehovah's throne. It seemed enough to take away the prophetic honor (and Ezekiel himself was evidently astonished beyond words at the

sight) to see a man in God's place. But Ezekiel saw it and he had to tell the truth. He did see the likeness as the appearance of a man on Jehovah's throne—a human God!

All that it taught Ezekiel I can not tell. He must finally have caught the fundamental truth so powerfully taught by the vision—a truth we need to remember as well as he—that God is human; that He is not a being of a nature alien from humanity, but that He has human feeling, human tenderness, human compassion.

O, it is a great thing to know that the One who rules the universe has human sympathy! Jerusalem is in ashes; the people are crying and moaning; they are homeless and lonely and poor and suffering. It is much to know that God, yea the great God enthroned above all gods, can give them and will give them human pity and help. The humanity of God! That is a most Biblical doctrine. His Deity no one denies, yet, paradoxical as it may seem, it is equally true that God is human and the Bible emphasizes this doctrine as strongly as the other. God is human; *i. e.*, the omnipotent Creator has a fellow-feeling and a common nature with His creature. God and man are kin. Why did we not always know that? How could man be in God's image, as

we have always been taught, unless God were also in man's image? God is human; infinitely wise and powerful, and yet tenderly and truly human.

God is human in His thinking, or the human could not understand him when he speaks. God is human in His feeling; how we need to learn and remember that. God is as good, at least as good, as we are. God loves as much as we do, at least that.

Whittier's boy, who wished God was good and tender as his father, lived as far back as Ezekiel's day, and the answer to this world-long cry of human need for a God that was human in his feelings toward His children came in this vision to Ezekiel, teaching him that on the throne of the universe was One glorious and almighty, yet having "the likeness as the appearance of a man."

Ah, there are many puzzles in the Bible and in theology; there are many mysteries in life, but over all, more certain than any theory or speculation or dogma, like the rainbow about the throne, is this eternal truth, God is human. The Deity has a fellow-feeling and a human sympathy with man. He is as good as the best husband, "Thy Maker is thy husband." He is as pitiful as the best father, "for as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear Him." He is as loving and gentle as

the tenderest mother, for, says He, "A mother may forget her sucking child that she should not have compassion upon the son of her womb; yea, she may forget, but not I."

Thank God for the revealed humanity of the One upon the throne. The ancient prophet may not have known the full meaning of the "man upon the throne." He hesitated to affirm that he had actually seen, even in vision, a man on God's throne; but, since the coming of Jesus, we dare to say:

"Through the thunder comes a human voice
Saying, 'O heart I made, a heart beats here!
Face my hands fashioned see it in myself!'"

And that leads us naturally to the thought of the Incarnation. I think this vision of Ezekiel alone would prove, what all thinkers must admit, that the Incarnation was not an extraordinary or arbitrary manifestation of God's nature. Rather, it was God's natural manifestation. God always had a human heart. The Incarnation in Jesus was the manifestation of what God had always been. Ezekiel saw God as a man upon the heavenly throne of power. Six hundred years later the world at Calvary saw God as a man upon the cross throne of love. Fifty years later St. John saw a man with pierced hands on the throne of the Eternal. The three are one.

It means simply that God always had and always will have a human heart of love for His children.

God and man always were kin; but never till God displayed Himself in Jesus, showing what He really was in His deepest eternal nature, never till then, did man believe it and rejoice in it. And too many fail to do that yet. Like Ezekiel, they are afraid to accept the happy fact that God is as good as Jesus, always has been and always will be; One who is ever seeking to help the burden-bearer, to welcome back the prodigal, to be friends with the sinners (the worst of sinners) if they will only allow the friendship and permit the help, glad to break the chains and unlock the prison doors for the worst of men, and willing to be physician and nurse and comrade and servant to every needy one.

And there is one more thought in the text that I can not omit. This is not simply a vision of the Incarnation. Ezekiel knew nothing of the Incarnation. What he *saw* was the likeness of the appearance of a *man* upon the throne; that is, humanity crowned and sceptered and enthroned with God. That is what he saw, and that is philosophic. The worshiper becomes like the one he worships. Let a man, even the worst of men, begin really to associate with God, and the beast begins to be killed out

of him, and he begins to be human like Jesus,—like God! He begins to realize what it means to be a man when he sees a man on God's throne. Is that a man? Then I am not a man yet, but I may be. It means more to be a man than we have generally thought. The "measure of a man," says the revelator, "that is the measure of an angel." The measure of a man, says Jesus, that is, to be like Me, to follow Me. The man who reaches that measure shall judge angels.

Ah! we have n't reached our manhood yet. To reach that would be to reach the throne. Humanity and divinity are so near together that Jesus could have both and could promise to His true disciples that they should be like Him, one with Him even as He was one with the Father, and should sit with Him on the Father's throne.

Jesus promised this. O, man; thy honor is the astonishment of angels! Thou art brother of the God-man, son of Jehovah, heir apparent to the throne of the eternal. Do not lose thy birthright. This is thy birthright, though multitudes are selling it for less than a mess of pottage. This is thy birthright, to be one with God, filled with all the fullness of God, and then to sit down on the throne of God forever.

If you would know what you can be, look at Christ, for He promised that you should be like Him.

"O Saul" (O soul) it shall be
A Face like my face that receives thee; a Man like to me,
Thou shalt love and be loved by forever; a Hand like this
hand
Shall throw open the gates of new life to thee.
See the Christ stand!"

VII.

PAUL AND NERO.

AN HISTORICAL CONTRAST.

"I was delivered out of the mouth of the lion."—
2 Tim. iv, 7. *"Fear not, Paul, for thou must stand before Nero."*—Acts xxvii, 24. (N. V.)

BOTH texts doubtless refer to the same incident. It is a thrilling thing to think of Paul as a Christian gladiator in the arena, facing the Nubian lion with its open mouth and hungry jaws, and only delivered either by some power from heaven, or by the interposition of Aquila or Priscilla in some heroic way. Yet really to stand before Nero was more terrific in danger and more tragic in outcome. Nero was worse than the lion.

One thing we are sure of; these two men once faced each other—Paul and Nero. The Word of God says that. It was a great day for each of them when they looked into each other's eyes, the two men most renowned of that generation; the two

men most talked about, then and now, of any men in Rome. Nero, the sovereign of the world; Paul, the prisoner, condemned as a heretic by his own nation, because of his faith in Jesus. They faced each other, these two. It was a great day. God had ordained it. In the midst of an awful storm an angel bore to Paul the message that even the Euroclydon could not hurt him, because he "must stand before Nero."

Now they stand face to face, these two strongest men, the best hated and most celebrated men of the empire. Paul sees one who as a babe was exquisitely beautiful, but whose face by years of dissipation had been marred; although even yet at times it could look kingly and most attractive; a man a little below medium height with chestnut hair dressed in rows of curls, dull gray eyes, a thick neck and terrible lips.

Nero sees a man of like stature with himself, or even smaller; a man whom his enemies describe as "mean of bodily presence," and whose eyes, even his friendly biographers assert to have been so weak that he found it difficult to do more than sign his name to his letters, and yet a man whose massive brow and firm lips and every feature betoken his masterful character and tremendous power of will.

Draw the contrast between Nero, chief of the pagans, and Paul, leader of the despised sect of the Nazarenes; the one choicest flower and fruit of heathendom, the other of Christianity.

I. Every one must be struck with the contrast in their position. Paul stands as a prisoner. He was accustomed to this. The damp, cold, solid walls and prison furniture were familiar to this man who had been “in prisons oft.” Nero sits on his throne in the “golden palace” which he had just completed, a palace so vast that its triple porticos were a mile in length; its roof so high that it could cover the golden statue of himself standing a hundred and twenty feet in height. The park about the palace was like a forest. The lake in the midst was like a sea in extent. Paul was accustomed to prison fare; Nero to the dainties of the royal table, fish from foreign rivers and crushed pearls to increase the cost of precious deserts. Paul wore travel-stained garments, the garments of a weaver, having probably but one suit to his name, and having to shiver with the cold until the cloak, which he had forgotten, could be sent to him by Timothy, as winter came on. (2 Tim. iv, 10.) Nero never wore the same garment twice; would stake four hundred thousand sesterces on one throw of the dice, and never trav-

eled with less than a thousand baggage carts, even his mules being shod with silver. Yet Nero was the poor man, and Paul had the true riches; Nero was the slave, it was Paul who was the free man.

II. Come now to these men viewed as to their intellectual endowments and accomplishments.

Nero had all the training that the greatest teachers of Rome could give him. Seneca, the great philosopher, was his private tutor. He prided himself upon his wit, his eloquent speech, his perfection of elocution, his taste for the beautiful. He was celebrated as singer, actor, poet.

Paul was not an actor, yet he had become, because of the tragedy of his great life, a spectacle to men and angels; he did not pose as singer or poet, yet his "poem of love" has no equal in the language. More than this, so lofty was his thought, so keen his logic, so convincing his reasoning, that to-day, while no word of all Nero's writings is remembered, even Paul's private letters and careless, offhand utterances are cherished by millions of admirers, and his ethical writings and religious arguments are accepted to-day as standard by the whole thinking world; while his writings show such a perfection of style and such philosophic grasp of thought that it has been said Paul and Seneca must have known

each other. In worldly position Nero outranked Paul in the eyes of his generation, and in literature he was thought of as supremely his superior, but time has changed this judgment. Paul, not Nero, is now thought of as the chief man of his generation, as the great intellect of that century, and powerful in letters.

III. Again let us compare these men. Man is not all intellect or will. What of the affectional nature of these men? Great thinkers are not always men of heart. Perhaps Nero outranked Paul in this.

Look at Paul, and greater even than his intellectual genius and the power of his logic, stand out his wealth of sensibility, his tenderness and delicacy of sentiment. He weeps over his Churches and mentions by name with loving adjectives a list of three or four or eight or ten special friends in every letter he writes. And how they loved him! They "fell on his neck" and "kissed him," and followed him miles when he was forced to leave them, sent him gifts seven hundred miles sometimes; and when they saw his poor injured eyes they felt like plucking out their own eyes if they could thus relieve his affliction. How tender, how womanly, was this lion-hearted, dove-hearted man, who could cry, "Though

I speak with the tongues of men and angels and have not love, I am nothing!"

Now look at Nero. No doubt he was very sensitive, too. No doubt he demanded love. If any young woman failed, for example, to return his offer of affection he signed her death warrant the same day. Nay, it is said that if any man "looked melancholy in his presence," as if to be with him was not better than to be in Paradise, he had him killed on the spot. It is certain that when his faithful old captain of the guards, Burrhus, complained one day of sore throat, this man said, "I can cure it; I have a sure remedy," and sent him a dose of poison. Every one knows about his tutor, Seneca, who, when he seemed to be getting more popular with the scholars of Rome than the young emperor, received one day a polite note from his old pupil requesting him to commit suicide, which he did, knowing that thus only could he escape a worse fate.

This man Nero, whom Suetonius calls a "wild beast," and Paul spoke of as "a roaring lion," killed every brother and almost every relative he had in the world. His sick aunt, who loved him very much, said to him once while a boy, as she stroked his smooth chin, "Let me but live to see this shaved for the first time, and I die content." "Good," says he,

"I will be shaved at once." And ordering his physicians to give her a death potion, he seized her estates even before the breath left her body. He had his first wife, Octavia, divorced, and then murdered, and twelve days after he married his second wife, he kicked her to death, "only because she found fault with him for returning home late from driving his chariot," so says Suetonius. Three times he tried to poison his mother and failed. Finally he constructed machinery by which the floor over her bedchamber would fall and crush her while she was asleep, and when this failed he constructed a ship and sent her on a journey, kissing her "in a very cheerful mood" as they parted. The ship, of course, fell to pieces as soon as it left the harbor, and though the queen mother escaped even this calamity, it was but a short time until she was murdered in her bed by a hired assassin.

Such was Nero. The contrast between Paul and Nero is the contrast between paganism and Christianity. In Nero you see the picture of a world without God and without a Savior. In Paul you see the picture of a world redeemed and sanctified and transformed. In Nero you see what passion unrestrained will do for a man; in Paul you see what "Christ in me" will do for a

man. Nero shows us what hell is, and how it can begin here and now. Paul shows us how a man of like passions as ourselves can live, having his "conversation in heaven." In Nero we see the very same passions which we ourselves are fighting, let loose and having dominion. In Paul we see the powers and virtues which God offers to us as he offered them to him, accepted, used, and multiplied in the using.

IV. This leads us to notice the contrast in the views of life and in the ambitions of these two men. Nero was very ambitious and so was Paul. Nero sought distinction as a poet, an actor, a musician, a charioteer. He won distinction, too. When he appeared in the games, even though he appeared incognito, the senator who surpassed him, not knowing whom he excelled, lost his head the same night. When he appeared on the stage of the theater every actor and every spectator hastened to call him the star of the company. Indeed, he had five thousand robust young fellows dressed richly, hired to applaud him and keep their eyes on those who had the bad taste not to applaud. When he drove in the race and was thrown and had to be helped back and held in his seat, he nevertheless won the race and was crowned victor. It was a capital crime to call

him a poor charioteer or a poor actor or a poor singer. So careful was he of his voice that he had his vocal teacher constantly by his side to check him from straining it. Such was Nero. Such great ambition was his; ambition to win the ears of the multitude, to speak well, and to succeed in the games.

Paul also was ambitious to win the ears of the multitude, seeking them in every city; ambitious to speak as he ought to speak, and craving the prayers of his Churches for this end; ambitious to use his voice right, so that whatever he did in word or deed might be said and done to God's glory. He was ambitious, also, to win a crown, and he "strove manfully" and fought "not as one who beateth the air" for a crown that was incorruptible and fadeth not away.

What a contrast between these ambitions! Nero was ambitious to be happy and lived miserably. He was ambitious to be popular, and was hated by all. He was ambitious to be royal in life, and despicably failed. Paul was ambitious to make others happy and won happiness himself. He was ambitious to do right, scorning the praise of man, and won praise from both man and God. He was ambitious to be a good "slave of Jesus Christ," and won the place

of "chief apostle" and more than royal honors in earth and heaven. The one shocked his age by his crimes; the other turned the world upside down by his self-sacrifice for Jesus' sake.

V. Do you see what makes the difference between Nero and Paul? It is not chiefly their natural disposition, environment, and heredity. It is chiefly the difference in their religious views and religious experience.

They stand here face to face, but a great gulf separates them; a gulf as wide as that between the penitent and the blaspheming thief; a gulf as deep as that between Lazarus in Abraham's bosom and Dives in the lake of fire.

Their desires, enjoyments and thoughts of life are as opposite as their religious views. Nero as emperor was also priest and occasionally conformed to the customary outward acts of worship, yet really "he held all religious rites in contempt." He was an infidel. He did not believe in sin. He claimed outright and boldly to be as good as any man on earth. He believed all men to be just like himself, only some hypocritically tried to hide their crimes. For a man to say as Paul did, "I am the chief of sinners, the least of all saints," seemed to him the vilest hypocrisy and deadliest sin. No wonder he

persecuted the Christians. This, by the way, was the only thing in his life that his biographer praised him for. He mentions the persecutions of the Christians as one of his few good deeds. He was not content with the ordinary method of death for Christians, but made a comedy out of it, dressing these Christians in skins of lions and then setting half-famished dogs upon them. He covered them with pitch and oil and turned them into torches with which to light his gardens, and as these torches writhed, Nero passing by in his chariot, laughed and then yawned, wishing for some new luxury of crime to excite his interest. Such was Nero, the man who did not believe in sin. And Paul stands before him, Paul who loved to reason of righteousness and judgment to come, Paul who never feared to speak the truth to mortal man. Would you not like to know what he said to him? No wonder Paul was beheaded shortly after.

Only the man whose conscience is seared as with a hot iron can say, I am no sinner. Nero said that. That was the first article of his creed. And the second was like unto it, I need no new birth; I need no Savior. Indeed Nero on his coins calls himself "the savior of the world." He believed in human nature simply working itself out naturally. He be-

lieved that civilization, æstheticism, culture, education, could be the salvation of the world. He got all of that he could. How he would have mocked at this man, Paul, who preached a Savior not himself! He would have said, "All that I do is natural to man, and therefore right. I do not doubt that you Christians need a Savior, but I do not." That was the second article of his creed. I have known people in this city who had the same creed that Nero had.

The third article of his creed was this: There is no God higher than myself. Indeed Nero claimed himself to be god, and altars were raised to him and sacrifices offered to him, and he refused any worship to a superior power. How that reminds one of the modern philosophy that teaches the deification of humanity; that there is no God greater than man—and it ought to remind us of the historic fact that only such a man as Nero will accept such worship. More than once Paul, because of his mighty works, was thought by the idolatrous populace to be some deity, and once bullocks covered with garlands were brought to be sacrificed. But Paul refused the honor. It is only a man like Nero who can think himself to be God.

VI. In conclusion, note the significant and startling fact, that this man Nero, this last of the Cæsars,

who claimed to be a god, this incarnation of unbelief, who scoffed at a future life and the Christian's hope, who boasted of his infidelity and the courage and comfort of his philosophy, when he came to die, met death very differently from this man Paul.

Both of these men met death within a few months of each other, probably not long after Paul and Cæsar, for the second time, looked into each other's eyes. The circumstances are well known, having been recorded by contemporaries. The emperor is spending his days in pleasure in Greece, giving great gifts to those who can invent new methods of sensual enjoyment. One day a messenger brings to him news of a revolt in one part of the kingdom. What cares he? He sings and plays and laughs and scorns all fear. Another messenger comes and whispers in his ear. His face pales, he gasps and faints away at the news. His army has revolted, his generals are faithless. What shall he do? That is the question which must be answered as he awakes from his faint. Shall he beg pardon of the populace and ask some low office at their hands? But he fears to show himself lest they kill him. Shall he drown himself? Yes, that would be philosophic and heroic, he thinks, but he trembles and hesitates. What shall he do? He flees to the

house of one of his freedmen, crawling on his hands and knees through the drain to get into the slave's apartment. Barefoot because of hasty flight, with bloodshot eyes, he has fled to the room of a slave to die, and still his courage fails him. His very bond-servants urge him to manhood. He seizes two daggers, theatrically tries their edges, then sheaths them again. He can not die. He breaks down and weeps convulsively, and begs some of his companions to commit suicide that he may see how to die. This man that had killed his best friends by the score, and murdered almost all his relatives! The clang of horses' hoofs sounds in his ears. Three minutes more and he will be captured, and if captured, flayed alive. He must die! He nervously holds a dagger to his throat, but can not strike, and does not strike. His slave is forced to drive the dagger home to save him from torture and public shame.

So died the last of the Cæsars. Died he not as the fool dieth? His last words, as one pretended to stanch the flow of blood, were, "It is too late, too late!" His eyes in his agony almost started from his head, and were the terror of all the friends who beheld him after death. But he left few friends.

The city held a jubilee on the day of his funeral. So much for the palace, the “golden house” of Cæsar; so much for the death of the infidel emperor.

Look at the prison. To-morrow Paul the Christian is to die. The sentence has been passed; the executioner is now sharpening his ax, and he knows it. Paul, Paul, how do you feel now? Is your faith worth anything now, Paul? Confess now the worthlessness of your hope.

And I see a light flame in his eye, the light never seen except on the Christian’s face; and now he takes up his pen, this old man, to write a few words to his dear friend Timothy. This is his last letter, and he knows it. Look over the shoulder of this man, his back covered with scars, and watch the words which are being traced by the chained hand: “I charge thee, therefore, before God, preach the Word, be instant in season and out of season.” Evidently he still believes in the same old gospel and expects it to live, even if he dies.

“Endure afflictions, make full proof of thy ministry, for I am now ready to be offered and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith; henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness which the Lord, the righteous Judge,

shall give me in that day, and not to me only but unto all them also that love His appearing."

Thus they died, Nero, the young man of scarcely thirty years, with the old, worn-out life, and weary, discontented heart; and Paul, "the aged," with the young heart and the hope of eternity thrilling his soul. Thus they died Nero, the poet, the play-actor, the singer, the man of letters, the emperor, the unbeliever, who lived unto himself and died as the fool dies; and Paul, the preacher, missionary, theologian, philosopher, reformer, Christian. They died, but that is not all. They died probably within a few weeks of each other. Did they go to the same place? Are Paul and Nero now sitting together in peace? Where did Paul go from that Roman prison? Where did Nero go from that freedman's villa?

Listen! I hear a wailing, and weeping, and gnashing of teeth. Death, death, death!

Listen! I hear singing and shouting and the voice of praise like the voice of many waters. Life, life, life!

Paul, Paul, brave, victorious Christian, may our faith be as your faith; may our life be as your life; may our reward be as your reward! Surely you have been delivered out of the mouth of the lion.

Yes, they live yonder and they live here. Their works follow them. And when some great reformer like Luther or Wesley appears on the earth and changes the whole earth for the better, the highest compliment we can pay him is to say: He is almost equal to St. Paul.

And when we have a dog to name we call him Nero.

VIII.

THE SILENCE OF JESUS CONCERNING THE FUTURE LIFE A REVELA- TION OF JOY.

"In My Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so I would have told you."—John xiv, 2.

THESE words were spoken when the disciples were dismayed at the prospect of separation from their friend and Master. They had expected Him to live on the earth and reign forever, and suddenly they were shocked with the statement that He was now to die. It was then that Jesus comforted them with these words.

The hope of heaven; what a blessed hope that is. The life beyond the grave; men have dreamed of it since the dawn of history, and before any history was written. Most skeptics accept this one doctrine of faith. Was it not Mr. Buckle, the enemy of supernaturalism, who yet acknowledged that it was only faith in a future life which saved the race

from despair? Was it not Mr. Ingersoll who said, "When one dies we will say 'We hope to meet again?'" Was it not Mr. Thomas Paine who even attempted an argument for immortality declaring that only the same Omnipotence which brought the soul into being could extinguish it; and he could not believe that God would create, simply to destroy?

But these were hopes only. The greatest philosophers were never able to reach certainty. Not one of the arguments which Plato gives in favor of a rational belief in a future life commands the assent of the best thinkers to-day. Plato, himself, admitted that he considered such arguments and speculations merely a raft on which a man ought only to trust himself until he could find some sure "word of God" which would more safely carry him. Jesus is the Word of God for which Plato longed. Jesus gave humanity a hold on heaven such as it never had before. He "brought immortality to light." Yet our Lord said very little about the future life. He never made any picture of it. Rather, our argument would be, His very silence concerning the future life proves that the hopes and longings of the race will not meet disappointment. If the expectations of the disciples had been baseless and false it

is unthinkable that such an one as Jesus could have been silent. Therefore, though Jesus had never said one word concerning mansions in heaven prepared for the good, yet I would have believed they were there and would have based my belief on His silence. No one who loved another could see him walk forward with hopeful eyes and know he was going to bitter disaster and not say one word of warning nor seek to check his eager expectancy. Here we see the revelation of joy to believers wrapped up in our Lord's silences concerning the future life. In my Father's house are many mansions—but why do I need to tell you that? Do I not know? Then believe Me—“*if it were not so I would have told you.*”

These words may well ring in our ears as among the sweetest Jesus ever uttered. They mean that these quenchless hopes, these unconquerable instincts of the human heart are to be trusted. We have the authority of Jesus for trusting them. We can not prove them to be true, any more than the bird could prove its instinct true who turns its face towards the south when the winter chill comes on and confidently wings its way towards a summer land which it has never seen. But we can be sure of this: if these instincts were deceiving us, Jesus

would have told us. The Psalmist was sure that the bright heavens declared the glory of God; but the Psalmist and all other Bible seers would agree that God's greatest glory can not be read from the inscriptions of the sky, but from his marvelous works among the children of men which show forth his truthfulness and everlasting love and his glorious power to make all things work together for the good of his servants and to do exceeding abundantly above all they can ask or think. This is a faith instinctive in the souls of those who have prayed most earnestly, "Show me Thy glory."

Said a red Republican of 1793 to a French peasant: "We are going to pull down your churches and steeples and all that recalls to you the superstitious beliefs in God and a future world." "Citizen," replied the good Vendean, "pull down the stars then."

As long as the stars hang in the heavens this star of hope in God and immortality will burn in the human breast. Is it to be trusted? "If it were not so I would have told you." These words of Jesus illuminate history. Men talk nowadays of the survival of the fittest. It is only the fittest organ, the fittest idea, the fittest belief, which persists age after age. Now go back as far as you may and

of every age it may be said as Cicero wrote, "There is, I know not how, in the minds of men a certain presage, as it were, of a future existence, and this takes the deepest root and is most discoverable in the greatest geniuses and most exalted souls."

Has the human heart played the race false and have the most exalted souls been best fitted for a false faith? "Not so," says Jesus; "if the universe and human nature were on the side of falsehood I would have told you."

Now walk through the Scriptures whose words of faith in a glorious future shine as confidently and brilliantly as the stars. I know that some have doubted whether there is any hint of a future life to be found in the Old Testament, but to me there seems an unbroken faith here in a happy unseen kingdom, from which occasionally flashes some resplendent, holy one with message of warning or of love for fallen man or into which some holy prophet may be caught up by an embassy of angels. Hear the cry of joy as the Psalmist looks beyond the grave: "Thou wilt show me the path of life; in Thy presence is fullness of joy; at Thy right hand are pleasures for evermore." (Psa. xvi, 11.) "God will redeem my soul from the power

of the grave; for He shall receive me." (Psa. xlix, 15.) "Thou shalt guide me with Thy counsel and afterwards receive me to glory. . . . Whom have I in heaven but Thee? . . . My flesh and my heart faileth, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever." (Psa. lxxiii, 24-26.) "As for me I will behold Thy face in righteousness. I shall be satisfied when I awake with Thy likeness." (Psa. xvii, 15.)

Are these but the rhapsodies of Hebrew poets? Yet the disciples believed their belief and hoped their hopes, and it was to them that Jesus said: "Let not your heart be troubled. In my Father's house are many mansions. Why can you not trust Me without My saying this? If it were not so I would have told you." We can trust these words. This Old Testament was the Bible of the disciples and the disciples trusted it and Jesus—it was His Bible, too—said: That is right. What it teaches is true; if it were not so I would have told you.

These blessed silences of Jesus, interpreted by the words of the text, do more than prove the mere fact of future existence. He knew that the disciples in that future life expected "fullness of joy and pleasures for evermore," yet He never said: "You are mistaken. You expect too much." Does not

that prove that God's children shall be satisfied with what awaits them?

Here is a boy the day before Christmas. All the year he has been wanting a sled. This has been his great desire. "O, papa, tell me," says he, "will I get one? I believe it. Am I right? Can I expect it?" And the father smiles and puts his finger on his lips and says, "Never mind, wait and see;" and the boy goes away jubilant. I say if that father was a true father he would not have kept silence unless the boy was to be satisfied—to get what he wanted or something better than that. I know well one father who said to his children one Christmas, "Do n't expect anything, I can't satisfy you this year." Then after the children went off to bed, this father climbed up to their little room and put a big penny in each little stocking and the mother put in a doughnut dolly or pony, and that was all—and the children were almost satisfied the next morning, for they had expected nothing. But what if the father had allowed them to expect sleds and dolls and trumpets and skates, and then put nothing in but a penny and a doughnut? Our argument to-day is that the Son of God could not have allowed us to indulge these vast expectations if they were not true. He would have warned us. The boy or

the girl, the man or the woman, whose breast is full of visions of great gifts in heaven and upon whom Jesus smiles, with his finger on his lips, saying wait and see, will not be disappointed. If we were to sink into oblivion or to meet with a reception yonder the opposite of what we expect, He would have told us.

Therefore there is to be rest and peace in heaven, though no word were written here promising rest and peace, because the noblest sons of men have ever longed for this and expected it. Heaven is to be a home, too. We might know that even if the apostle had never said that he was looking forward to the time when he should be "at home with the Lord," for it is my longing and yours and the longing of the race—and if it were not so He would have told us.

Does some one ask to-day concerning the dear ones who years ago fell asleep in Jesus? Do you breathe the prayer of Tennyson,

"Ah, Christ that it were possible
For one short hour to see
The souls we loved that they might tell us what and
where they be?"

The text brings you glad news. These friends are safe and happy. Will they know you when you arrive? Certainly. As the old farmer said, "Folks

know at least as much in heaven as they do on the earth." Your best dreams for them are being realized—at least that. God could not disappoint those whose hope was stayed on him. They may have been surprised at heaven, but they have not been disappointed.

I do not know what heaven is to be altogether, but there will be plenty of room there. There are many mansions. I have no sympathy, nor has the spirit of the Bible any sympathy, with the common view that we shall be boxed up behind high walls in heaven. John the Revelator never meant that. I heard of one man who had calculated the number of cubic feet in a building 12,000 furlongs high, and 12,000 furlongs broad, and 12,000 furlongs long, and decided that, if built up solid, it would give a room, O, perhaps, twenty feet square to every one who would be saved. He thought he had solved a great problem concerning heaven! Out upon such calculations! I could not help pitying the poor prisoners cooped up in the middle of such a box as that would be. It is bad enough to live in a "flat" in this life without continuing that sort of cramped existence eternally. The text is opposed to any such notion. Jesus did not say, "In My Father's house are many *rooms*;" as if each saint was to

be limited to a room or a small suite, but in My Father's house are many mansions, "palatial abodes," awaiting the redeemed. I expect heaven will be large enough for every inhabitant to have a lawn, or a park, all to himself. I look for wood-lawns and meadows and mountain sides on which the redeemed can enjoy the companionship of choice friends, or of "Jesus only." Some people think this earth some day is going to be heaven. I have no objection, only if so it will have to be a very different earth from what it is now. As it is now this little world is not large enough. It might do for an arbor or a lane in which to take a morning walk; but it is not big enough for the home of the saints.

Where will heaven be then? Perhaps after all, those older astronomers were right who claimed that all the systems of the universe discoverable through the telescope were wheeling about some central world; a world as much larger and brighter than any we can see as the sun is larger and brighter than an electric light. Who knows but what that "broad and ample road, whose dust is gold and pavement stars," which we call the Milky Way may be but a thoroughfare for the angels leading to the central capital of the universe?

O, says some one, that's speculation and be-

sides modern astronomers have decided such a world is too big to expect. Yes, it is speculation, but it is not exaggeration. There is nothing too big to be expected of God. If it can be said of the revelations of the Spirit to saints on this earth, "eye hath not seen nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him;" how much more may this be said of the revelations which lie yonder in those unexplored glories of the future world. We do not exaggerate though we may speculate. We may not dream it as it is, but no dream of ours can excel the reality. No language of earth, no imagination of poet or artist, no hope, however vast, can equal the reality which Jesus has gone to prepare for them that love Him. How do we know that? Well, once there was a man, whether out of the body or in the body he could not tell—others have thought they knew, but if they did they knew more than the apostle—who was caught up to the third heaven, to Paradise, and saw mysterious glories, and heard unspeakable words, which he could never tell of, but which he could never forget; and who in all the years that followed looked with hungry eyes to the future, realizing that it would be "far better to be at home with the Lord."

So an exile a few years after on a lonely island got a vision of God and of the city of God; and when he tried to tell what he had seen he could only paint a picture in which he put all the precious things he had ever seen or heard of, gold and gems and pearls and palaces and crystal seas and rainbows and thrones—and the one who understands that book is not yet born. O, but you say, is it a revelation then, if no one understands it? Yes, it reveals to us that the unrevealed is better than our best thought.

Let the eye do its best to picture what heaven is, entranced before all the wonders of light and color, foaming ocean and flowering mountain, and gorgeous sunset—heaven shall be that, or better than that. Let the ear rejoice in its anthems, its psalms, its hosannas, its hallelujahs, the voices of birds and music of rippling streams and thundering cataracts, the whispers of the evening wind, the shouts of children and the voices of our dear ones, better than all—the music of heaven shall be that, or better than that. Let the heart bring its hopes, its loves, its faiths, its ecstasies, its revelations, its communions—heaven shall be that, or better than that.

Even Jesus himself did not attempt to describe

heaven to us. O the glorious revelation of that silence, interpreted by these words which give permission to the human soul to stretch itself in most confident expectation, "if it were not so I would have told you." He knew what awaits us. He knew John's longing and ours, and He never warned us against hoping too much or believing too much. "I have much to tell you," says Jesus, "but you can not bear it now." That was the reason he kept silence. Nothing we dream is too noble or great for realization. A wondrous dream is in our soul as we lie down and place our head on the old Book to die, like the dream in the breast of the worm which feels its old house decaying and dreams a dream of song and beauty, of vast and flowering gardens and new powers and wings like the butterfly which soon are to be its very own. Is this dream too beautiful for realization? No, *God will not even disappoint a caterpillar, and the worm gets its wings.*

Will not the Creator treat us as well as he treats the worm? Yea, verily. We are the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be; but we know that we shall be with Him and be like Him. When we ask what are the glories prepared for the sons of God, redeemed and ransomed at the great-

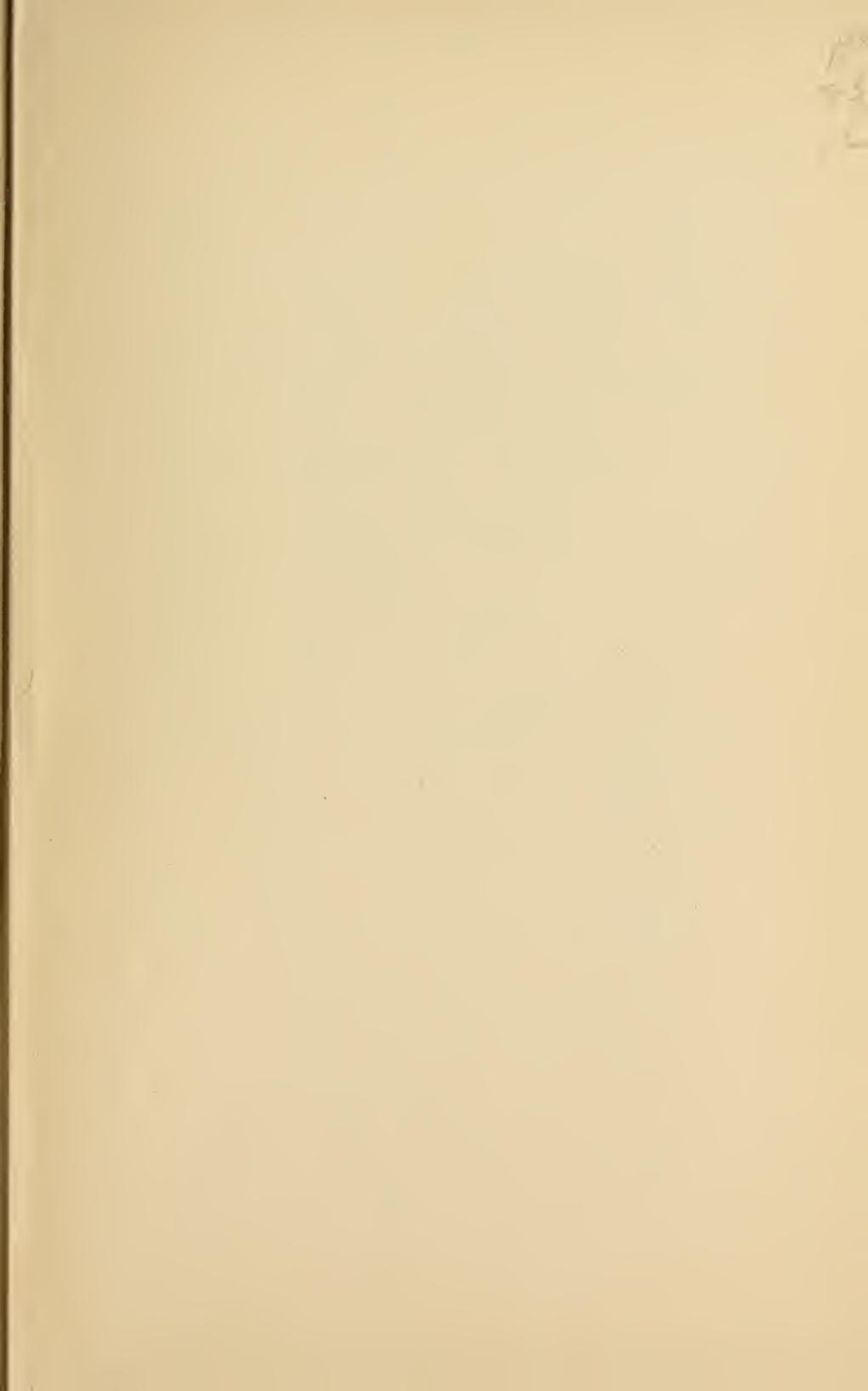
est cost even heaven could pay; when we ask what means that vision of golden streets and gates of pearl and seas that shine like glass and fire, Jesus only answers: "Wait and see. They are there, that or better than that. If it were not so I would have told you." Presidently, if faithful, the strange, glorious, divine surprise shall burst upon us.

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